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# Brand Management

*Edited by František Pollák and Peter Markovič*





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and Peter Markovič*

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## Contributors

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# Meet the editors



Dr. Pollak deals mainly with the issue of corporate reputation in the context of its sustainable development. He is the recipient of numerous awards, including Best Paper Awards from the Global Business Conference (GBC) and the Academic Research Conference (AAR) New York in 2015 and 2017, respectively, an Excellence Award from Megatrends and Media in 2016, and a Quality Recognition Award from Research Leap in 2018. He

is a member of several organizations, including the European Alliance for Innovation and others.



Dr. Markovič is a university professor and researcher with more than 400 publications on sustainable business and building company brands to his credit. He is a member of the Council of Elders of the Slovak Finance Association and the International Group Treasury Association.



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# Preface

In a market economy with a highly developed competitive environment, it is natural to maximize the utility of resources. Overconsumption, as the desired state of the economy of growth, puts enormous pressure on production and thus on securing sufficient resources of a diverse nature. Here, seemingly endless growth meets the limitations of the physical world. The application of the principles of sustainability is thus one of the basic determinants of the long-term survival of market economies or even entire ecosystems as we know them today.

In view of these facts, it is possible to assess the issue of sustainable development, sustainability, and a low-carbon economy as extremely topical, even key, for all industries as well as for any entities using resources of a physical nature.

From the point of view of comprehensive brand management, the issue of the sustainable industry takes on a whole new dimension. It is a well-known fact that the issue of brand development in the traditional world has been known to companies for decades. Managers have acquired a set of skills to build a brand, but this set of skills is not final but rather evolving. Beginning with the era of production marketing management from the time of Henry Ford, when demand far exceeded supply and the available product was equal to market success, to today's times of hyper supply and hyper information, the number of variables necessary for active management of business activities, especially brand management, has multiplied to almost innumerable dimensions.

The rapid rise of mass communication media in the second half of the 20th century fundamentally changed the established principles of business practice in many areas. Before the onset of the media era, the brand of corporate entities was difficult to develop; subsequently, however, it was easier to manage. For decades, procedures for building a brand have been refined. Years of proven and effective brand-building tools have managed to offer solutions in difficult situations. However, the time has changed, the flow of information has accelerated, and the nature of information has adapted to the time. The Internet has changed the way we look at brands. What was once private is now public. What was once local is now global. What was once fleeting is now permanent. And what was once credible is now unreliable. These changes can be explained by the fact that Internet technology has directed human interactions. Understanding the unique relationship between technology and online culture is key to understanding how to manage brands while developing a comprehensive corporate reputation. Failure is certain for those managers who use offline techniques to solve online problems. Instead, it is essential to understand the cultural and technical differences between the online and the offline world to effectively protect and enhance the intangible assets of a business entity.

The combination of baseline factors in the form of the transition to a sustainable economy in the age of accelerated digitization creates a completely new, hitherto

unknown, market environment. The number of variables necessary for successful brand management in this new, semi-online environment is almost limitless. This book explores key topics in the field of brand management at a time when companies are increasingly reaching for responsible and sustainable approaches, as well as being forced to digitize many business processes.

This book discusses several issues of marketing management within the limits of marketing communication. Starting from the issue of Internet marketing, describing the starting points for a better understanding of the digital ecosystem, the book continues with a look at the transition from offline to online from the point of view of marketing strategies in the process of building brand equity. Followed by a systematic review of standardization versus adaptation of brand elements in international markets, the book ends with chapters devoted to reflection on the topic of living the brand. The book itself creates the opportunity to seek qualitative knowledge for future in-depth research into the accelerated digitalization caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, or simply put, the transition from offline to online.

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Section 1

# Introduction

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## Chapter 1

# Introductory Chapter: Brand Management as Part of Corporate Identity

*František Pollák*

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Brand Management

Brand Management is a process based on a predefined philosophy and is a manifestation of the vision and mission of an enterprise that it applies almost in all steps toward the public. As a term, it is materialized in both the philosophy and business strategy of the enterprise, as well as the corporate culture, behavior, and general design of the whole company. There is often mistaken incorporation of Brand Management into Marketing Communications, while this is exactly the opposite - Marketing Communication is one of the major components of Brand Management.

In today's effective enterprises, the process of Brand Management is heavily intertwined with the process of building a Corporate Identity. With the Corporate Identity must be a thoughtful and timeless business standard that governs the company. Every enterprise is unique in its search for identity, and its unchangeable features can become a significant competitive advantage. A high-quality Corporate Identity has an external effect on customers as well as an internal one within the business, where it increases efficiency, motivates employees, and gives them a sense of belonging.

A company's identity expressed through its products plays a significant role in the way an enterprise presents itself to the wider environment. Using visual means, the enterprise expresses its values and goals. For all entities, whether they are profitable or nonprofit organizations, it is important to make them more visible and distinct. Markets should know that the organization exists, remember its name, and know what it is doing. The process of creating a memorable brand is always individual and seeks to be exceptional and different. There is no uniform template that fits into two different businesses [1]. It should always be tailor-made as much as possible for a particular subject. Creating a brand should be a systematic process beginning with the very beginning of the enterprise itself.

However, this process is often neglected today and mistakenly considered irrelevant. The formation of corporate identity and brand management derived from it, is a professional practice governed by market laws. Creating an identity often ends when assigning and creating a brand. Thus, brand management is a process

within one of the subsystems of Corporate Identity, but it occupies an important position within the ecosystem of business processes.

Corporate Identity can be divided into four subsystems:

- Corporate Communication
- Corporate Culture
- Product
- Corporate Design

Using these four elements of Corporate Identity, an enterprise creates and strengthens its market position, which it then interprets internally and externally based on its knowledge, ideas, and attitudes (**Figure 1**). An image interpreted in this way is spoken of as a Corporate Image, this is gradually reflected in the products of the given enterprise (**Figure 2**).

Another basic issue that needs to be mentioned in the introduction to brand management is effective targeting, if the enterprise wants to be as successful as possible in business, the management of the company should know as accurately as possible, what segment the company is operating.

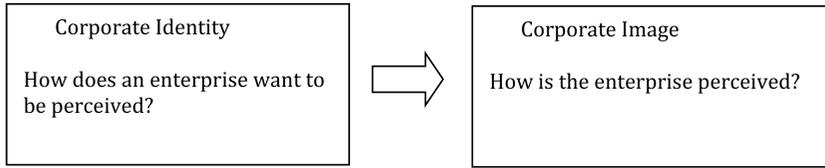
The success of a business is dependent on a clear definition of the target group - those we want to reach out to with the product [2]. It is necessary to realize how important it is to drive a targeted approach. It is not possible to address everyone in the same way, and therefore market segmentation is the best solution.

Outlines three main parts and six targeted marketing steps that are shown in the following figure developed based on the scheme from Kotler and Keller in Pollák and Markovič (**Figure 3**) [3].

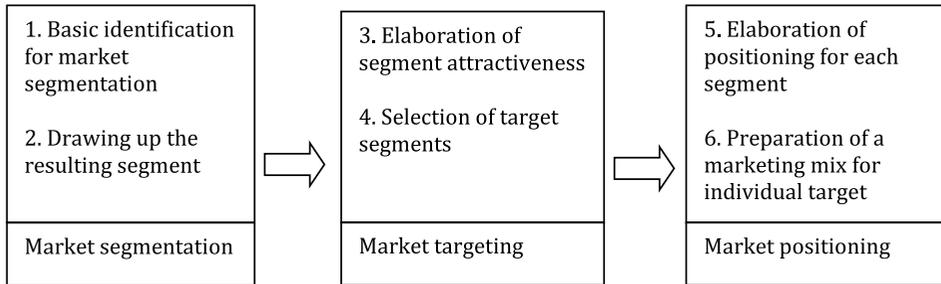
For targeted marketing, instead of a broad-based marketing program, emphasis is placed on partial tailoring market approaches to the requirements of the target customers, while the ultimate form of targeted marketing is tailor-made marketing [4]. This is the main difference between the targeted and bulk market approach, which is currently being addressed by very few companies. After identifying the market segments, one or more appropriate ones need to be selected and prepared for the marketing and communication mix as well as the product itself, according to the needs of the target consumers.

The system of Corporate Identity			
The way the enterprise looks-	The way the enterprise communicates-	The way the enterprise behaves-	What the enterprise produces-
Corporate Design	Corporate Communication	Corporate Culture	Product

**Figure 1.**  
*Corporate identity and its subsystems.*



**Figure 2.**  
 Relationship between corporate identity and corporate image.



**Figure 3.**  
 Six steps of market segmentation, targeting, and positioning.

Each successful market strategy must be based on a thorough analysis of the current state, a survey of market opportunities, their segmentation, targeting, and finally, based on the correct placement of the right product. If the brand management process includes all the mentioned steps, as well as considers the fundamentals of market trends based on customer needs, and devotes thorough pre-preparation to the strategy, the company is on its way to being successful. What's more, the company as a market unit and its products are more likely to thrive in the marketplace than they would be in a haphazard sequence of procedures and reckless experimentation. The dynamic and turbulent market requires a purposeful and prudent approach.

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Section 2

From Offline to Online

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## Chapter 2

# Internet Marketing

*František Pollák and Peter Markovič*

### Abstract

The issue of brand management is taking on new dimensions at a time of accelerated digitization. The aim of the chapter is to approach selected areas of the issue by pointing out the basic forms of promotion in the digital environment of the Internet. An appropriate mix of these forms is essential for effective marketing communication in the digital environment. Where appropriateness and efficiency are necessary factors that need to be taken into account in the process of building a brand in the eyes of reference markets. Understanding the fundamentals of the issue of promotion in online environment creates a precondition for a holistic approach, which in combination with scientific knowledge tools reduces uncertainty and increases the assumption of market success. The chapter in the form of a theoretical overview study presents the results of ongoing research into the topic of Internet marketing. It synthesizes the knowledge of the authors, as well as the results of the work of selected reference authors, who at the beginning of the millennium shaped the issue into the form in which it is known to the wider professional public by today. The theoretical overview, supplemented by highlighting the key context, presents a relatively clear starting point for an introduction to the study of the topic of Internet marketing.

**Keywords:** e-marketing, digital marketing, online environment, Internet, marketing communication

### 1. Introduction

The issue of the application of marketing communication tools in the Internet environment has been of interest to both practitioners and researchers from academia for more than three decades. The chapter summarizes the core results of continuous research by the authors. The basic foundations of the topic will be presented in the following parts of the chapter in the form of a theoretical overview of the state of knowledge, so that a comprehensive view of the issue can be created from the synthesis of knowledge accumulated in individual parts of the work.

The topic as such is extremely dynamic, in any case, the cornerstones of marketing communication do not change over time. On the contrary, they complement each other and thus expand the knowledge and tool base. With the optimal combination of these tools, it is possible to significantly contribute to brand building in this hyperinformation time period.

As the authors of the study, we refrained from formulating the initial research question, as in such a vast topic, unambiguously answering any more ambitious research question would be quite problematic. Especially considering the already

mentioned dynamics of the topic itself. Instead, we define a research problem, which in our case is the existence of the foundations of the topic, which defines the issue toward its further development.

Therefore, let us look at the topic from the point of view of context analysis. The following subchapters synthesize the findings of the state of knowledge. Following the introduction, in sections 1 and 2, the basic definitions, as well as the basic division of Internet marketing tools will be presented, which we will follow up with a detailed description of specific tools in individual parts of the work ending with conclusion.

## **2. Marketing on the Internet**

David Meerman Scott [1] states that before the emergence of the website, organizations only had two significant options to draw attention to themselves. They could either buy expensive advertising space or get mentioned in the media. Then the web changed these rules. The Internet is not television. Organizations that understand the new marketing rules create direct relationships with their consumers.

Marketing on the Internet is referred to by various terms such as Internet marketing, web marketing, e-marketing, and so on. However, it should be noted that the concepts of digital marketing and online marketing also include marketing via mobile devices. E-marketing uses the basic marketing principles, which it applies to the Internet. This form of marketing, like traditional marketing, involves many activities related to influencing, preserving, and maintaining customer relationships. It focuses mainly on communication, but it also sometimes influences the formation of prices. E-marketing is considered a continuous process because the Internet environment is constantly changing. The Internet has greatly contributed to differentiated customization. Under this term, we can understand a sort of compromise where companies understand different customer needs and therefore adapt their products as well as the communication with them. It also explains mass customization, which means that the customer builds their product from basic components. For mass personalization, the company will contact the customer individually and suggest a standard product. As a result, the Internet gives us the opportunity to focus on customers with higher, but also lower values [2].

Addressed approach is the key to efficiency, and efficient use of corporate resources is the way to greater competitiveness.

## **3. Forms of Internet marketing**

In this section, we briefly list and describe the forms of Internet marketing, which are increasingly being used every year and are gradually replacing the so-called old marketing rules. The selected forms of e-marketing will then be described in more detail in separate subchapters.

Although e-marketing offers many benefits to businesses, it is important to think about how to use it. Traditionally, there are four ways in which e-marketing can be applied in practice [3]. These ways are as follows:

- Websites,
- Internet advertising,

- E-mail marketing and webcasting,
- Marketing on social networks.

### **3.1 Websites**

The costs for classic marketing and business are growing dramatically, but the results are stagnating. Therefore, it is imperative that organizations are adapting to modern trends in order to maintain a company's viability. Costs spent on classic marketing nowadays represent an inadequately expended effort.

Most companies would have difficulty maintaining a high share of sales, production, or employment without their own website. If companies did not innovate in the areas of Internet marketing, they would be forced to sell at "any cost," which would lead to lower prices for their own products with time. Finally, profits would also fall, and, with limited funding, the company would be forced to make cuts in human resources and product and technology innovation, areas that are an essential prerequisite for maintaining competitiveness. The Internet undoubtedly is one of the most extensive on-line information sources [4, 5]. And information is an important factor in company management and decision-making processes.

Great emphasis is placed on the need to access important facts in real time. Information available in real time in one place is essential to optimize business performance. The best place to maintain, collect, sort, update, and share information is a company's own website.

### **3.2 Internet advertising**

In most countries of the world, the Internet is fully commercial. A significant number of the World Wide Web users use it for trading purposes. The overwhelming majority of the population begins, and finishes, shopping right on the Internet. Therefore, targeted and accurate online advertising is an important part of the sales strategy of each company [6]. It is, therefore, possible to generalize the assertion that Internet advertising is one of the tools of Internet marketing.

### **3.3 E-mail marketing**

E-mail marketing, or in other words, the sending of advertising emails or emails with informative value and an advertising message, is one of the basic tools of marketing on the Internet [7]. However, in some circumstances, this form of e-communication may be considered as unwanted interference with privacy or harassment, in which case e-mailing becomes spam (junk mail).

### **3.4 Marketing on social networks**

Social networks mean a revolution in performance marketing as they allow people to search for groups according to very specific criteria. Sites like Facebook allow companies to filter profiles based on gender, age, education, employment, status, or based on keywords in pastimes and hobbies. This means that every business now can save financial costs by focusing on a group of potential customers through the above-mentioned filters. Thanks to effective social networking, companies can reduce costs and gain a lot of new customers.

## **4. Website marketing**

The basis of all marketing activities on the Internet is the web. That is why it is very important to create the right website marketing. Website marketing is a way of attracting enthusiastic users to website based on its content and services [8].

### **4.1 Website**

With today's Internet penetration [9, 10], every company having a website is almost a matter of course. The quality of these sites often lags the average, but their very existence speaks to the purchasing power of the Internet. The service providers in this area are numerous and choosing a company to prepare you for a high-quality web presentation can be difficult without basic knowledge of functionality. A web presentation is prepared in HTML (x) and has been an indispensable part of the CSS cascading style for a year. The demanding nature of the programming languages in which the page is built is also directly proportional to the functionality requirements of the site. The quality and power of website processing can be evaluated by four crucial criteria, which are as follows:

1. Accessibility of the widest spectrum of the public and their software equipment, the simple and intuitive usability of the sites, the quality of the HTML code that can influence the results of search engines, attractiveness, and design suitability.
2. As users are reading less and less on sites, the trend of the text in the presentations, therefore, speaks clearly – as little text and as much information as possible.
3. The user comes to the page to find information, so website needs to provide it to them in the shortest possible time. Otherwise, they will leave the site and go on to other websites of the competition. The website should be simple and clear and based on the corporate identity of the company as much as possible.
4. There are several projects on global Internet markets that will evaluate a page individually according to its qualities and deficiencies, businesses can thus gain feedback from professionals.

If a website is to be competitive, company needs to be aware of the basic rules of its creation. These are issues such as:

- how it should look,
- how company wants to reach out to the customer,
- and what company can guarantee.

How should the home page look? According to Janouch [2], it should not be an unnecessarily long introductory presentation, as few will watch it to the very end. This was also reported by a survey conducted by Akamai on a sample of 1000 respondents. From the sample survey, up to 75% answered that if the presentation takes more than 4 seconds, they will leave the website. Then, 3 years later, Forrester

conducted this survey, which revealed that this time had fallen to just 2 seconds. Therefore, home pages should avoid this, but also attempt to eliminate similar clichés, such as “Enter,” “Select Language,” “Welcome,” and so on. Another problem is missing text and site links, because not only a visitor, but even a search engine robot cannot navigate it because of the lack of keywords [2].

As far as the content of the website is concerned, it should be possible on to discover a minimum amount of information, such as the company description, contact information as company history, company structure, other company information, a description of products or services, or technology used. The company should have an available catalog for each target country, price information (if the company does not want to list the price list, it should at least provide indicative prices), and the possibility of feedback (by email, form, opening a discussion group, etc.). However, if subjects want to differentiate themselves from competitors, they must move their site to a higher level, as described by Hajsaleh [11]:

- Website must be a real asset for potential clients – What the customer will benefit from, that is, from using the product or service.
- The benefits should be hard for competitor to offer – This means something on site should be unique. At present, it is probably the most sophisticated option.
- Prospects should be of sufficient value for potential customers – Benefits must be strong enough for a visitor to become a true customer.
- The website itself must bring a unique advantage for the visitor – It is good if the company knows what distinguishes it from the competition, but its visitor must also be able to distinguish that. These are the unique benefits offered to customers, more than just the sale of products or services.

#### **4.2 The use of the subconscious of the customer**

There are several simple ways to increase the credibility of website:

- Google Map – Verifies the location and position of business, as this information is verified by post and a subsequent verification code after registration in this system.
- Telephone contact – This is a good way for a customer to verify the situation by phone and thus the company gains respectability so that they have a place to turn to in case of problems.
- Choosing the right URL – In the past, domains were selected in conjunction with keywords, but today it has little effect. Therefore, simple names should be chosen instead so that they can easily be remembered. If company wants to use some keywords, they should be separated by a dash and not more than two keywords should be created.
- A detailed description of the company and activities – In this section the company history and description should be written, as well as what certificates or awards it holds. Strategic plans should not be written there.

- Verifying the trustworthiness of the website – There are companies on the Internet that, under certain conditions, must be complied with, given various certificates of the trustworthiness of a website.

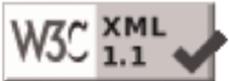
### 4.3 Website certification

In order to find out if the website has standard source codes, companies can use websites designated for validation. They are determined by the type of scripting. Only some logos are listed in the following **Table 1**. Site encoding is contingent on W3C w3.org standards, that is, the validator.w3.org [12]. If these logos are placed on a site, the visitor will be sure that there is no bad source code on the site that could be left behind by the programmer through an oversight. They are also placed to provide assurance that the web page is properly displayed on any Internet-connected device.

### 4.4 Website creation

If company wants a website, it must have a marketing plan drawn up as part of the communication strategy on the Internet. Therefore, it is necessary at the beginning to realize and clarify the benefits that the website will bring to them and whether the costs and investments will be reimbursed. Benefits from own website are as follows [13]:

- increasing visibility, awareness,
- improving corporate image,
- market expansion, access to global markets,
- improving customer service,

Document type	Gold
HTML 4.01	
XHTML 1.1	
CSS and MathML Document type	
CSS	
XML Document type	
XML 1.1	

**Table 1.**  
Summary from the list of W3C validation icons. Source: [12].

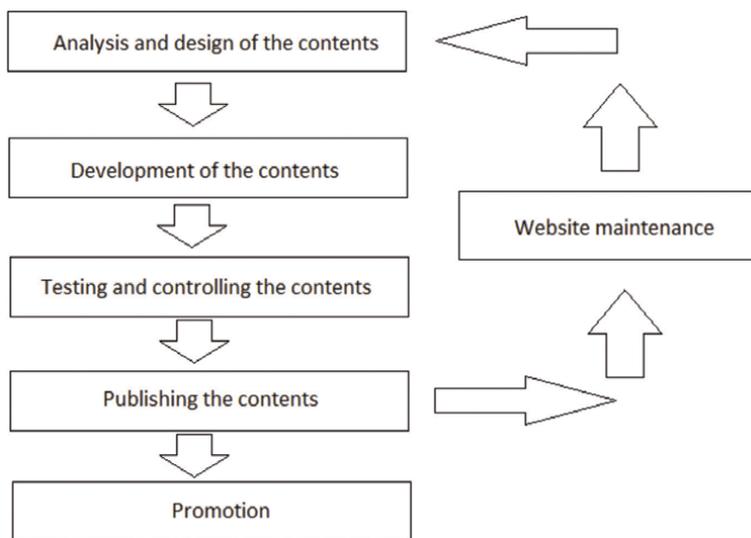
- lower communication costs, cost-efficiency,
- increasing the speed of transactions.

Creating own website could be summarized in the following steps [2]:

1. Definition of goals – Whether it is an e-shop or a web page. If it is an e-shop, the goal is clear – selling goods or services. When it comes to an MDA (Most Desired Action) website, the goal is to present a product or service by taking a trial sample, launching a new product, downloading a catalog, providing a discount coupon, etc. In this way, it is necessary to try to determine the effectiveness of the MDA on the website.
2. Who the page is intended for – When creating the page itself, it is necessary to focus on the target group for who the content of website is intended.
3. Choosing the right keywords – This is important not only for the content of the page as such but also for the correct visibility of the site through web search engines.
4. Quality content – The main thing is to have a heading on the site. It is one of the most important elements on the site to make it easier to index and then easier to find it on Internet search engines. The heading text should grab the attention, it should have a slogan or motto of the company and it does not matter whether it is text or an image.

The allure of the heading itself consists of attracting attention, providing basic information about the offer, and motivating to read more content (**Figure 1**).

As the eye-catching design and appearance are concerned, when a visitor arrives at the website, they must be able to easily navigate it. Visitors are divided into two categories:



**Figure 1.**  
The procedure for creating web pages. Source: [14].

- Those who are oriented according to the graphical representation (they largely also come from graphic ads),
- Those which come from text ads and focus on the text, especially the headings on the website.

#### **4.5 Search engine optimization**

The term search engine optimization (SEO) is simply a particular technique dealing with ways to place the site in the best position in the search [15]. The actual goal is not to be optimized for search engines, but for a customer who is looking for specific information and is orientated according to the content posted on the site. Therefore, when creating a site, it is necessary to focus primarily on the content side, while also using the search engine robot to automatically index the keywords it finds in the text. This method takes a little longer if the search engine robot records a full site, but thanks to keywords a greater number of customers are brought to the website. Therefore, if the company does not want to wait, it can increase this traffic through paid form of Internet advertising described below. However, these options also belong to the issue of SEO.

#### **4.6 Web search engines and SEO**

An explanation of how web search engines work can be described by a two-part structure from a robot (called a crawler, spider, bot, fish, or worm) and a web interface. A robot, whose algorithm is patented works automatically. Its main task is to browse websites on the Internet and index pages, text documents, PDF, Flash, and so on. The web interface is the search engine page itself [16]. Douglas Merrill from Google defines a Googlebot as a modern cartographer that creates a detailed map of everything it sees around itself [17].

#### **4.7 Factors affecting SEO**

The factors influencing SEO are many, we will describe some of the most basic ones:

- Robots.txt – The file located on the server where the page is stored. This file contains information on what the search engine robot is permitted or prohibited to index.
- Link building – This refers to building links. It is the process of acquiring hyperlinks from other websites to our own.
- Link baiting – It is like the previous type of linking, with the difference that a company does not put energy into external link sources but into the content section of the page to attract as many visitors as possible and they link to our site themselves.

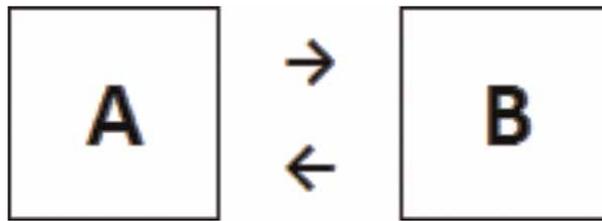
As for the issue of link baiting, it is a relatively large construct. We will try to explain it with examples as follows [2]:

- Free links – This most often occurs between companies that work closely together and link to each other.
- Exchanged links – If companies work in the same industry but differ in the type of goods or services supplied, they exchange links. If it concerns different fields that are not related, this factor could hurt company in the SEO rather than help.

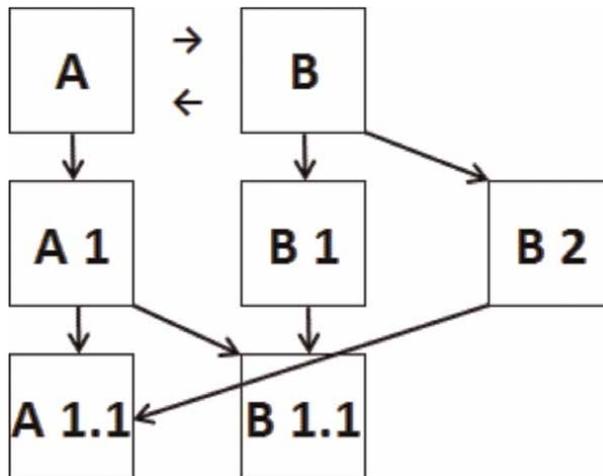
The following image illustrates the differences in the exchange of links between two domains, as well as exchange of links between related pages as follows (Figures 2 and 3):

Other examples of how link baiting can occur are as follows:

- Purchased links – It is a banned tactic. If it happens, there is a risk of damage to placement in the search engine. Company can pay for the links in several ways. One way is to buy a link, that is, sign up for a paid catalog (dir.yahoo.com, business.com, jayde.com, rambler.ru, and others), for an article on a foreign or news site that links to our site, but company should consider the cost by comparing the PPC campaign.



**Figure 2.**  
Exchange of links between two domains. Source: [2].



**Figure 3.**  
Exchange of links between related pages. Source: [2].

- Buying older websites – Another option is to buy outdated sites. It is best if they are from the same industry as our company. Since links are already created on them, which can serve as a micro website for our needs, then it is preferable to buy such sites.

## **5. Internet advertising**

Advertising, marketing, and trading on the Internet is one of the world's most recent topics of last decades. In most countries of the world, the Internet is fully commercial. More than half of its users in the world use it for business purposes [18]. In the long years of the Internet, certain rules have been developed for marketing purposes, which are followed by most companies. Internet advertising should have a good visual effect [19]. We should focus on its objective on the visual side. The aim should be to determine which group of consumers the company wants to reach. The content is also important. It should be worthwhile for the group of consumers that the company has chosen to focus on. It is inappropriate to use large files whose download is lengthy and unattractive to potential consumers. In content, a company should primarily focus on valuable information that consumers would most likely be interested in if they were interested in our products or services. An important part of the ad should also be an effort to highlight the brand and image of the company. In this way, a company shows consumers on the Internet how it differs from others. Since advertising is part of a marketing strategy, it should also be accordingly formulated. Finally, it should be so persuasive that consumers should be convinced and decide to visit the site again. If all the above tips are met, the ad will be of interest to prospective customers. Such advertising on the Internet may then:

- increase sales,
- improve brand image,
- affect customer brand perception,
- bring new information on the product and brand.

It follows that Internet advertising has its own look, graphics, and idea to engage customers to maximize its impact. Therefore, advertising is something that will help our product, lure Web users to visit website, and eventually sign up on it too. Internet advertising is a needs-based advertising. Consumers ask for advertising if they need it, and then it should be delivered to them as well. With the flexibility and creative potential of the Internet, it is easier to create and fine-tune an ad than ever before. This means companies can launch a web ad immediately, and the results will arrive in just a few hours.

### **5.1 Contextual advertising**

The contextual advertising philosophy is built on providing the user, after searching for a keyword, with relevant text links [20]. Most portals, as well as other sites, should have a search feature. In this way, the user can easily browse the content of the page or the database of indexed pages in case of a portal or search engine. The

contextual advertising system offers the use of this functionality for commercial purposes, so that the result display space is divided into unpaid (organic) results and paid (commercial) results that are made up of advertising links to advertisements. Advertisers have space in their keyword search results that they determine themselves. Contextual advertising is shown in addition to the search even on the relevant pages, respectively articles related to that keyword. The content of the page is analyzed, and the relevance of the keywords is evaluated in relation to its content. Depending on the related keywords, relevant contextual ad links appear on the part of the page specified by the company. This display method is called the display of contextual links to content.

## **5.2 Graphic advertising**

Graphic advertising, usually represented by the banner is another type of ad used on a website [21]. Banner is typically a rectangular image or animation, respectively interactive graphics, most often displayed near the edge of the screen. Banners are still one of the most common forms of advertising on the Internet. Graphic advertising is represented by different types of ad formats. Some banners enable the provision of more information or use more creativity to create a banner. The division of banner ads by formats is as follows:

- full banner (468 x 60 pixels),
- half banner (234 x 60 pixels),
- microbar (88 x 31 pixels),
- skyscraper (120 x 600 pixels).

The effectiveness of this form of Internet promotion is currently questionable, but in any case, there are factors that need to be considered when preparing campaigns, such as the following:

1. Targeting – It is important to decide where an ad will appear. If company chooses a provider itself, it is necessary to choose thematic sites to obtain focus.
2. Advertising format – The format is selected according to the objective determined by the advertiser. If company is interested in a long-term campaign focused on the brand, it is good to choose for example a video ad or a banner (graphical representation). In the second case – the short-term presentation of a particular product, banner, and text ads are also appropriate.
3. Design – All ads must have certain prerequisites to be successful from the point of view of processing. For banner advertising, it is most important that the banners be attractive graphically.
4. Funding – Some funding should be allocated to the campaign in advance to eliminate potential problems. If, for example, there were a lack of money in the middle of the campaign, it could cause it to either partially or fully lose its effect.

## **6. E-mail marketing and webcasting**

Considering the dynamics of the industry, we are expanding the e-mail marketing tool with the topic of webcasting, as a phenomenon of an authentic form of e-communication.

### **6.1 E-mail advertising**

E-mail-based advertising, or e-mail marketing, is a solution that is cheap, easy to access, relatively efficient, and requires little expertise [21]. But it also has its own risks. The main risks are the very benefits of this solution. This especially involves the low price. The low cost to reach any number of recipients is a good reason to use precisely this solution. With a minimum cost, companies can reach many potential customers. They also should send emails to those who ask for it. For example, when subscribing to web portals, the customer agrees to being sent emails on the site. In this case, these are authorized emails. There is also the second option of sending mail to interested users, whether they have requested it or not. In this case, however, it is SPAM. Apart from the legal aspect, SPAM has one disadvantage that in most cases, due to the antispam filter, they do not reach the user to whom they are addressed. E-mail ads may encounter several obstacles. The above-mentioned antispam filters have a significant share of nondelivery of mail directly to the addressee. They furthermore include overcrowded email boxes, the email content, poor integration with other forms of communication, inefficient customer segmentation, inadequate personalization, low user interest in sign-up, or irrelevant content.

In general, e-mail advertising can be divided into two ways [22]:

- Addressing only those users who have subscribed to the advertising or newsletters (registered to receive them). These are authorized emails.
- Sending emails to users who are prospective for the company, regardless of whether they have requested this service. These are unsolicited emails or SPAM.

### **6.2 Webcasting**

Weblog, or in abbreviated blog, is a web application that contains chronologically sorted posts [21]. It integrates possibilities as it is a valuable source of news, trends, and attitudes, both for readers and for classical media. According to the content, weblogs are made up of personal diaries, newsletters, political campaigns, or journalism. A personal weblog is based on an individual, a collaborative small group of friends, or a broad community.

Other formal variants of weblogs have been developed:

- photoblogs,
- videoblogs,
- podcasts,
- linklogs,

- moblogs,
- tumblelogs, etc.

In general, weblogs are classified between social and community media. The benefits of blogs have recently been understood not only by individuals but also by companies. Thanks to blogs, commercial organizations can make use of the unimaginable ability to communicate widely with customers. With the help of blogs, companies can better prepare new products, offer, and sell goods, promote their brand, and stay in constant contact with customers [23].

### **6.3 Blog content**

In the virtual environment of the Internet, we encounter several parts and tools that characterize the blog such as follows:

1. Posts – These are articles written by a blogger. The most recent post is always displayed at the top of the blog page, and the older posts are moved downwards while keeping the chronological order. By permanently posting individual posts to a permanent address, blog visitors can refer to the individual posts in their comments. Blog authors often place links to fresh posts on the sidebar, or links to posts with the most comments or the most interesting conversation.
2. Comments – Nearly all the software solutions for blog management offer readers the opportunity to attach their opinions and ideas to individual posts or to express their disapproval. Thanks to comments, a discussion between the author and the reader may start on the blog, which can attract other visitors. Comments can bring a lot of benefits to the operator, but they need to be given sufficient attention. One of the main reasons for actively monitoring comments is SPAM. For authors of these SPAM, the main benefit is a great deal of links to their site and hope that thanks to this number of links, Google or another web browser will consider the linked site as very interesting and will increase its rating.
3. Trackback – From a technical point of view, trackback web technology can tell one website that another page links to it. Trackback facilitates communication between blogs and is a warning that somebody is reacting to some article. Therefore, they do not have to respond with a comment in the article. It is a sort of thank you for the link.
4. Categories – Most blogging applications allow bloggers to create different categories into which they list individual articles. A list of these categories is displayed on the sidebar. When a user clicks on one of the categories, the blogging software automatically searches for all posts in this category and displays them.
5. Blogrolls – These are simply lists of links to other blogs that bloggers often show on their blog on the sidebar.
6. Calendar – Blogging applications allow you to view a calendar on the sidebar. This is a classic calendar that shows the months and days you entered the blog

post. After clicking on the selected day, all the posts that were written on that day will appear.

7. Search – One of the best ways to make all articles available is by placing a search box on the sidebar. Thanks to the search function, which can search the entire content of a blog, readers easily get to the text containing the entered keywords.
8. Tags – A useful feature facilitating the organization of posts is by assigning tags. For example, a tag may be a common word (music, sport), but it can also be much more specific. Especially if it concerns product names (for instance Linux) and companies (for instance Microsoft). Tags are keywords according to which articles can be searched for. They can be seen on the sidebar, but also as tag clouds.
9. RSS – Something like the icing on the cake on blogs. The RSS abbreviation means Real Simple Syndication and is a news subscription that allows blog readers to subscribe to the blog and let you post new posts from the entire blog or only from selected categories. RSS has the role of informing the reader that something has changed on the website.

When creating a blog, companies need to choose one of the options for distributing news:

- Send headlines only – Only article headlines appear to news readers, so readers must join the blog if they want to read the post.
- Send the headline and a partial copy – In this case, the headlines of the articles appear, as well as the first few sentences of the articles.
- Send the headline and the whole copy – This way the user will see the entire post, so they can read it in one application without having to join the blog.

#### **6.4 Weblog and promotion**

Almost all commercial companies spend a lot of money on market research in their areas of interest to disseminate information about their business and the products. For most successful business companies, blogging is a way to spread general awareness of their activities.

We generally know four types of marketing blogs [23]:

- Blogs that help businesses better understand the market and interact with it,
- Blogs that support business awareness and visibility,
- Blogs aimed at selling products,
- Blogs to support increased website traffic.

Blogs helping companies better understand the market and communicate with it:

- Authors and blog readers create a “virtual group” in which companies follow and respond to comments. The lessons learned from these discussions are used to improve their products or services. That is, if it is in our interest to get a response from the target audience we want to reach, just post a product post on the blog, allow comments, and ask readers for a response. It is also important to pay close attention to what’s happening in the blog, in which readers contribute their comments to have control over the activity and exchanges of opinions that are going on here. Such monitoring is primarily based on authorizing comments and removing inappropriate texts.

Blogs promoting awareness and visibility of a company:

- The goal of many companies is to make users encounter their offers as often as possible when browsing the site. Blogs with many visitors differ from others in visibility and findability. Web servers that are often spoken about and to which links from many other websites lead are more visible than servers that are less discussed and less linked to. The same goes for blogs. The more sites that link to the posts in company blog, the more visible company will be. The sites that search engines place in the top places are findable because they are the most interesting for the given name. This means that the sites listed in the highest places have more customers than sites in the lower places. Such sites, which are in the leading places, must meet certain parameters that make them highly rated by the search engines, which prioritize them. As a result, the more interesting the site per search engine, the more visitors it will have. Therefore, it is clear that if company wants to get the highest possible placement, it must make sure that as many users as possible link to it. A company can achieve this by writing on a regular basis and by making a lot of interesting posts to get readers so interested that they want to alert other users via links.

Product sale blogs:

- Sales promotion blogs should not be written in a way that exerts pressure, forcing customers to buy, as readers will feel very negative, and this will be reflected in the content of the comments. Such blogs should include a brief introduction of the company with a link to the product overview. It is also beneficial if they contain descriptions of products and information about the good experience customers have with their products. Many potential customers do not trust buying through unfamiliar and unverified blogs, so companies should use the services of intermediaries that customers trust. Such online purchasing systems, which are often used to mediate sales, include, for example, Amazon, PayPal, Yahoo!, or eBay.

Blogs to support increased website traffic:

- Blogs can greatly increase business website traffic. Companies that want to set up a blog to increase the number of visits should first decide which Internet domain they want to place their blog on. Of course, most companies first consider running their blog in the same domain their company website is on. This means that when users visit a company blog, they are also in the domain of the business, and it follows that all links that point to blog posts improve the rating of the

entire web presentation in the eyes of Internet search engines. However, such a solution is technically much more challenging than creating an account on a blog server such as Blogger.

## **7. Marketing on social networks**

Social media enables people to exchange ideas and opinions, share site content, and network online. Social media differs from classical mainstream media, in which everyone can create their content, contribute to it, or comment on it. Social media can have various forms, such as audio, video, photo, and other image forms. They connect communities and reach out to people who want to join [1]. In short, social media can be defined as mutually open online applications that help create informal user networks. The positive thing about social media is that the user becomes an active content creator. They select what they want to receive and then comment on it.

When considering the use of social media for promotional purposes, it is necessary to set the target and the timeframe for achieving this goal in advance. Next, it is necessary to identify the target group of customers that we must observe, and based on this, it is then possible to determine where the group is moving and through what tools it gets to the relevant information. Social media include social networking sites, blogs, video and photo download sites, chat rooms and mailing lists, listservs, wikis, and social bookmarking.

Social media allow users to:

- Change communication – From passive to active participation Traditional media is based on viewers. And this is their main disadvantage. A viewer only looks, nothing more. In social media, one acts as a viewer, contributor, creator, and promoter. Passive viewing on the screen has prompted an active engagement in communication between the content creator and the recipient. People have the option of expressing their opinion with a simple like or contributing to the discussion with various comments. They also can create content, whether to make a video, write a blog, create a group, and in other ways. The term social media is a broad term that includes social networks, blogs, sharing videos and photos, wikis, podcasts, etc.
- Accessibility of content – Social media consists of people. This means that a person has a lot of opinions on one thing. Whether it is a political scandal or a new product on the market, there will always be several opinions on a particular subject. If people browse for a product or service over the Internet, they can see what other users' opinions are or they can see a review. Most of this content comes from people who have some experience with a specific product or service. Users not only find out what the company is saying, but also what the world is thinking.
- Benefits for company marketing – Companies are also involved in creating and sharing this content. They want to take part in discussions about products and want to know what people are saying about them. Marketing on social media is, therefore, built to contribute to the creation of discussions and the sharing of opinions. The advertisements on the right or left side of social networks become a less important element. For every company and product, the promotion strategy

obviously varies. However, there is a lot of evidence of the successful use of social media for effective promotion.

## **7.1 Social networks and promotion**

Functions and options that are the content of social networks and that offer them for marketing purposes are important advertising channels that can be very targeted to marketing activities. The possibility of accurate targeting based on sociodemographic parameters offers space for very effective advertising campaigns. On the other hand, the ability to create a custom profile for both commercial and noncommercial purposes is represented by a PR channel that can be obtained and created by a community of fans of the product.

The profile page is then the place where all activities can be communicated very effectively and operationally. In addition to automatically posting messages to other fans' profiles, they will also be able to be seen by their friends. If the profile is interesting for the friends, they, can, and often do become new fans [24].

The use of social networks for marketing purposes includes:

1. SEO (Search Engine Optimization) – All search engines prefer regularly updated content, and since social media texts are relatively often updated and added, it attaches great importance to such pages. It is important to use keywords in headings, in content, as well as in linking to relevant sites.
2. Building useful links to company own website – When commenting on foreign blogs and forums, or when posting/publishing posts, it is necessary to include backlinks to companies' own web pages in these texts. Information is thus visible and even if the link cannot be directly linked to the site, it is important to leave at least one contact.
3. Building a stronger brand position – If users enter a name or brand when searching for a certain product type, attention should be paid to its display on the site. The company logo and any other brand names should be properly presented and visible.
4. Specialization – Since creating a profile on social networking sites is simple, there is no need to confine it to one main page, the purpose of which is to collect all potential clients. A smarter tactic is to create a few specialized profiles – up to individual products or services. They attract the attention of a particular target group and address its specific needs correctly.

Within marketing, social networks can be used to achieve the following goals:

- building PR and a good name,
- creating a community of supporters and fans,
- active communication with supporters,
- space for publishing content,

- ad campaigns with precise targeting.

Any organization or business can have a profile page on the social network. Depending on the business, the range of social networking options offered to meet marketing goals also varies. If the goal of promotion is sale, in this case, it is possible to promote in particular:

- the brand of goods or personal service,
- an event or action,
- specific entity (for example club, disco, restaurant, bar, cinema, etc.).

Otherwise, social networks serve as PR support and good relationship building, as well as regular communication with customers. For success on social networks, the following steps need to be reconsidered [25]:

- A thorough analysis of the potential offered by these networks for business,
- Knowing the target group,
- Careful tracking of statistics and measuring return on investment for decision-making on the further direction of activities.

Making real customers from fans is not easy, but it is possible. A well-organized competition attracts many social network users and some of them can be persuaded to purchase [26]. Active communication and creativity are the basis. The way to success is to not be afraid and to promote your company on social networks, not just be there.

Marketing and social networks today form an inseparable pair to help meet corporate goals [27–29]. It is a constantly effectively developing area, that should be included in the marketing plan of companies and organizations that can utilize the potential of social networks.

## **7.2 Promotional errors on social networks**

Most small businesses know that they want to use social media for marketing [30–31], but they often make critical mistakes in creating this strategy, which also costs them resources. The top 10 promotional mistakes include:

1. The absence of a plan – Many social networks are free, yet they still cost resources. They cost time and time is money. To avoid wasting time, it is good to process a very simple marketing plan. It is important for a business to ask what they want to achieve using social media and how they want to get it. Another point is determining how much time and resources a company wants to put into it. Once the plan is complete, the company can focus more on achieving the desired results.
2. Hastiness – After creating a plan, many entrepreneurs will throw themselves into everything that the social space offers. However, that can be a big mistake. Not all social media is designed for businesses as well. This can be avoided using

a social networking survey on which social networks are best suited for business, where they can potentially flourish, and which network is being used by the competition and customers.

3. Insufficient or no tracking of social response – Smaller businesses are usually limited by time and budget. Therefore, it is important to consider all aspects of doing business and to be sure it has some meaning. Social networks are no exception. Companies need to know what they want to achieve and that they will be able to track and check the goals they have set. This is possible with the different types of programs that social networks offer for monitoring traffic.
4. Insufficient provision of information – Many small businesses do not use the social networking capabilities associated with uploading images or videos and, in addition, do not provide enough information about themselves. It is a big mistake. All aspects of the company, such as the logo, contacts, and all business information, are a tool for selling and gaining customer interest and confidence. An important fact is that if the company profile is filled to the fullest, it is more likely that customers will find it in search engines as well.
5. Self-observation – It is very important that in conversations and debates the company not only mention its name but also that it discusses and asks questions. Equally important is answering questions, commenting, and responding.
6. Ignoring negative remarks and comments – From time to time, someone will negatively comment or respond to the content or post of the company on the social network. The first reaction, delete, is very common but also wrong. If a company removes a negative post, it does not believe in what it is doing. Instead of deletion, it is better to confront such comments and address them directly, so the company gets more loyal customers.
7. Ignorance – Wherever the company is mentioned on the Internet. Whether the company wants to socialize or not, a lot of information about it is publicly available on the Internet. Various sites may contain business information regardless of whether you created the profile. It is an opportunity how to further reinforce awareness on the Internet. However, it is important for the company to have access to this information from the administrators of such sites to update it and to see if the operators of the site have the same information about the company.
8. Not spending enough time – Building an image online takes time. If it is important for a business to be successful online, it must allocate enough time for it. It also must be constantly on-line to communicate and be in the picture. If the company does not have enough time, it is better not to start with it.
9. Low enthusiasm – For a company to survive on social networks, it needs to work hard at it. If it does not do marketing enthusiastically, it will not work. One option is to hire an employee who is solely responsible for social networks. For a company to succeed, it must also be sincere.
10. The selected social media is not appropriate for specific business – It is not good for all businesses to use social media that can also be very time-consuming for them.

## **8. Conclusion**

The issue of effective promotion in the Internet environment is a constantly evolving construct. The synthesis of knowledge of traditional marketing and inhomogeneous virtual market creates an almost uncontrollable number of variables. Increased addressability in conditions of reduced authenticity creates even more discomfort in this context. Building brands and maintaining relationships with customers is therefore a challenge. In the Internet environment, not only players from the environment of small and medium-sized companies are challenged, but also big market players are literally waging a daily struggle with a turbulent environment in which, under certain circumstances, the voice of the individual carries the weight of the whole corporation.

Today's Internet market offers a wide portfolio of communication tools. Adequacy and efficiency are key determinants of success. At the beginning of the new millennium, the very foundations of e-marketing communication represented a relatively homogeneous tool set for progressive marketers. Internet sites, as a basic communication element, were a relatively simple ecosystem in which the supply and demand sides of the market interacted. With the gradual development of technologies, the need to optimize this ecosystem arose. This involved both the optimization of the technical solution and the optimization of the content. With the advent of search engines, Internet marketing is entering a completely new era. Personalized content has increased the efficiency of spending resources on marketing communications. At the same time, it helped to better satisfy the needs of the market by revealing its latent needs. Content advertising support systems were able to generate relatively significant volumes of Internet traffic in the search engine-website direction. An evolutionary shift was noted by the establishment of virtual social networks in the environment of information flow. All these milestones represent the foundations of the topic as such. In the context of the research results, it can be concluded that the research problem identified by us, that is, the existence of the foundations of the topic, which define its further development, was examined in an adequate way. The chapter thus presents a clear and compact knowledge base from the point of view of the basic tools of Internet marketing. Understanding the fundamentals is key to understanding the broader context. From the website to the virtual social networks, this chapter is the starting point for an introduction to the study of the issue.

## **9. Limitations and perspectives for further research**

From the point of view of limitations, it is necessary to point out that the text is almost dominantly based on the literature, which corresponds to the time in which the individual foundations were codified in practice. The topics of Internet marketing are extremely dynamic, individual tools are undergoing continuous development. In any case, the basics of the theme do not change, innovation as such expands the theme. It was this fact that was considered in processing the text.

From the perspective of further research on the topic, authors consider it necessary to point out the trends of accelerated digitization, which arose from market changes during the global pandemic. This trend is likely to determine the further development of the issue. It, therefore, needs to be given due attention.

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## Chapter 3

# Perspective Chapter: The Transition from Offline to Online Marketing Strategies to Build Brand Equity

*Munyaradzi Mutsikiwa*

### Abstract

The chapter discusses a paradigm shift from offline to online marketing strategies that organisations may employ to build customer-based brand equity. The rationale for online marketing is fully discussed in the chapter. This chapter considers how business practitioners would select best fitting strategies to build brand equity. The chapter discusses among others the virtual presence, the marketing activities, the product, the price, and the distribution strategies. In addition, online strategies to enhance brand awareness and image, elicit a brand response and increase brand resonance are discussed. The chapter will include strategies that are contextual to developing economies.

**Keywords:** offline marketing, online marketing, marketing strategies, brand, brand equity

### 1. Introduction

The advent of the internet has transformed the way communication in business and community is done. It has greatly impacted the traditional media – the offline media – which had been the major media for business communication for thousands of years. The offline media face a threat of extinction because of the rivalry it is facing with online approaches to advertising which are more compatible with the current epoch. Unlike the traditional media, the internet offers facilities for companies to use social media, which in turn permits advertisers to tailor-make advertisements to specified groups of consumers. Through the internet, companies can deliver information to a targeted audience. It has been realised that targeting enhances the quality of communication between businesses and their target market arena [1].

Online marketing offers a platform for intense competition because even small companies can compete through online marketing with a limited budget. Contrasted to offline marketing such as the use of television, newspapers and radio among others, online marketing is less expensive and more importantly online audiences exceed

offline audiences [2]. Online media has been promoted by the arrival of social network sites, which has greatly facilitated e-commerce. Thus, online media has created a breakthrough in the marketing of products and/or services online. Of particular importance is the interactive nature of online media which permits a reciprocal flow of information from both the organisation and its customers. This implies that users of social media can modify the content in real-time. As such online media is superior to traditional marketing media which affords users a one-way flow of communication messages. More so, the online approach to advertising has eliminated the effect of geographic distance because businesses can now communicate with global customers with a click of a button [3].

In the era of the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) online media has become a business stall for business practitioners. Online media are platforms that are used by marketers and business people to launch products and services, communicate brand messages, develop customer loyalty and build customer-based brand equity among others. To attain this, business people must design online business strategies that are compatible with the platforms and with the needs of virtual customers. Although countless business people are getting used to the use of online media, the applications of such media might not be the same across the global markets due to disparities existing among economies. One of the major challenges facing online marketing strategies is the wealth gap existing between the developed, the emerging and developing countries.

Because of the improved interactivity of online brand communities, the sharing of different types of content between brands and customers and among customers has afforded brands to create exceptional brand image, identity and more importantly customer-based brand equity [4, 5]. Social media marketing strategies are essential in building strong brand equity [6]. The speed of message dissemination and the abundance of information sources have attracted marketers to shift from offline to online media to create brand awareness and enhance consumer preferences towards brands [7]. The development of strong brand equity is the final goal of all marketing and branding activities. A brand with positive brand equity can create customer loyalty and engagement with the brand since customers will have positive perceptions and attitudes towards the brand [8].

Positive brand equity denotes customer loyalty and their active engagement with the brand. In addition, creating community feeling in favour of the brand in the mind of the customer is also a crucial issue for a better brand. On the other hand, a favourable brand image represents customers' positive perception of a brand [8]. According to [9], social media platforms offer settings for customers to engage in sincere and friendly communications with the brand and other users, thereby creating relationship equity and brand equity. Social media is impactful in creating brand equity through users' social media engagement [10]. While marketing practitioners agree that social media provides valuable support for marketing activities in general this chapter focuses on the transition from traditional marketing approaches to online marketing strategies to build brand equity. Therefore the chapter is organised as follows; the chapter begins by defining the key terms, followed by a discussion of the challenges that companies encounter as they change from offline to online marketing strategies, after which a discussion on the reasons for implementing online strategies is done, thereafter the chapter discusses the online strategies that organisations may employ to build brand equity and upon completion of this a summary of the chapter is given at the end.

## **2. Research methodology**

In the process of writing this chapter, an integrative review was employed wherein the researcher attempted to go slightly beyond the description of the identified articles but also included a certain extent of analysis of the reviewed information. The methodology entails the presentation, analysis and synthesis of information that was obtained from different sources (Grant and Booth, 2009). In real terms, the researcher reviewed and synthesised representative literature on the transition from offline to online marketing strategies to build brand equity. This methodology involved the presentation of existing literature, and an attempt to consolidate information on various factors was done. This permitted the author to discuss ideas under specific topics as identified in the extant literature and permitted the researcher to contribute to the development of the topic and also to a limited extent pointed to the gaps that may need further scrutiny in future studies. Even though this researcher employed the critical or integrative review it should be noted that it has a weakness in that the approach lacks an objective and structured approach that is endowed in the systematic review approach (Haddaway et al. 2014). However to mitigate against such biases an attempt was made to be rigorous in the write-up. By so doing the researcher made sure that the topic could enable readers to understand how the transition of marketing strategies from offline to online has progressed over years.

## **3. Definition of key concepts**

This section looks at the definitions of the key terms in this chapter as operationalised by the writer.

### **3.1 Offline marketing strategies**

Offline marketing strategies entail any advertising or promotional practice that leverages traditional offline media. An offline marketing strategy normally uses channels that include television, newspapers, magazines, radio, direct mail, billboards, and in-person events among others. Because of the transformation that is currently happening in marketing, modern-day offline marketing strategies are used to support or supplement online strategies [11]. Though studies confirm the effectiveness of offline marketing strategies in certain contexts, these strategies cannot stand the test of time as most organisations are embarking on online marketing strategies.

The transition that is currently happening does not imply that offline marketing strategies are useless but they are effective at edifying online brands and the equity of the brand. In real terms, a combination of offline and online marketing strategies has a considerable impact on building a brand reputation. When combined, offline and online marketing strategies can complement one another and produce an amplified impact. Because of the effectiveness that offline offers to companies a brief discussion on its importance is discussed next.

First, despite the transition, face to face meetings are still important as they play a significant part in networking. They can help to direct traffic to the website of a company, especially when you meet people and later on they visit your website to learn more about the company and its products. Depending on the context, handshaking is still crucial because it eliminates abstraction from your

brand. Second, offline marketing strategies offer opportunities for companies to attend conferences and trade shows. These events are quite critical since they offer avenues to distribute company and brand-related literature. Third, company representatives can engage with the target audience through speeches. Speeches play a significant role in creating credible companies. Fourth, consultations and demonstrations are more realistic when there is a direct link between the seller and buyer. Generally, live demos offer additional confidence to the would-be buyers of the products of a company. Ultimately, offline marketing strategies increase the company's visibility.

### **3.2 Online marketing strategies**

Ref. no. [12] define online marketing as: “the use of the internet and all associated digital electronic technologies to achieve marketing goals” by reaching various users at their convenience”. According to [13], online marketing strategies entail the campaigns and activities that are employed to promote products and services and in most cases create long-run relationships with the virtual community [14]. The most inclusive definition is the one that is given by [15] who notes that online marketing is the application of “digital technologies which form online channels (Web, e-mail, databases, plus mobile/wireless & digital TV) to contribute to marketing activities aimed at achieving profitable acquisition and retention of customers (within a multi-channel buying process and customer lifecycle) through improving our customer knowledge (of their profiles, behaviour, value and loyalty drivers), then delivering integrated targeted communications and online services that match their individual needs”. Thus online marketing is an avenue to communicate and target consumers with the use the digital technology – social media and the internet. This definition entails the contention that online marketing is hinged on the interaction of users of social media. This is a major characteristic that set it apart from traditional and offline marketing.

### **3.3 Customer-based brand equity**

The concept of brand equity was coined in the 1980s and since then, there has been a proliferation of studies on the subject. As a result, there has been an ongoing debate on the concept. Several definitions have been suggested [16]. Brand equity is defined as added values that are endowed in a brand [17]. Aaker [18] defined brand equity as a set of assets and liabilities linked to a brand's name and symbol that add to or subtract from the value provided by a product or service to a firm. Another definition of customer-based brand equity is developed from a customer's perspective whereby brand knowledge, familiarity and associations regarding the brand are considered. Keller [19] defined customer-based brand equity as “the differential effect of brand knowledge on consumer response to the marketing of the brand.” The understanding of brand equity from a consumer's perspective is important as this would allow companies to generate profits and build the equity of the brand.

According to [20], brand equity is a multidimensional construct that is grouped into five categories namely perceived quality, brand loyalty, brand awareness, brand association and other proprietary assets that include trademarks, patents and relationships. Thus, in the discussion of this chapter attempt is made to explain how online marketing strategies help organisations build brand equity.

#### **4. Challenges of online marketing strategies**

Despite the proliferation of online marketing strategies, they are also challenges that emanate from inexperienced users. Consumers lack confidence in the use of the internet. There are a lot of people who find it difficult to trust the online marketing processes, for the developing world both the urban and rural people do not have access to the internet. This makes it imminent for marketers in developing to rely on both offline and online marketing strategies.

When customers want to buy products in most cases they prefer to feel or touch the product before making a purchase decision. Customers are afraid to purchase defective products and for perishable items, there is a fear that they may buy stale products. The lack of personal contact in online marketing strategies has made this approach less appealing to some of the virtual customers. Because of the lack of personal interaction, some customers who prefer face to face interaction are scared away from shopping online and still prefer shopping in brick and mortar stores. For such customers talking to store personnel, socialising with them and touching the products before making a purchase decision is critical. For these reasons online marketing strategies are less appropriate for this group of customers despite the factor that it is growing substantially.

One of the most threatening issues related to online marketing strategies relates to fraud – customers from most developing countries are afraid of online fraud. Regardless of the proliferation of online transactions, many people do not trust electronic methods of payment and neither do they trust that the purchased product will be delivered after purchase. Because of such fears customers are scared away from using the online platforms to purchase products and services. Online trust entails the perception of the website's ability to meet the consumers' expectations. Organisations that use online facilities must have deliberately built trust and persuaded virtual customers that online purchases are as real as offline purchases.

The advent of the digital revolution is a threat to business models. A business model refers to how a business creates customer value and how it provides revenue to companies [21]. A more comprehensive definition was given by [22], who conceptualised it as “a well-specified system of interdependent structures, activities, and processes that serves as a firm's organising logic for value creation (for its customers) and value appropriation (for itself and its partners). The changes in business models affect value creation and appropriation. In the majority of situations, companies have integrated digital technologies into existing business models considerably affecting existing business models. For example, one of the striking challenges that Network Service Providers face relates to the rapid adoption of free digital services like WhatsApp. In a way, these companies are facing a reduction in revenue emanating from free facilities.

One of the most important challenges of digital marketing is the ability to generate and leverage customers' opinions and insights. In online marketing a lot of data – big data is generated – which is difficult to process by the use of hand databases management tools. Challenges related to this include capturing the data, storing data, sharing data and analysing the data generated online [23]. On the other hand, big data provide opportunities for companies to follow customers from the point of awareness to the point of purchase until they become loyal customers. Despite the need to track customers, there is still a challenge to attain this goal because of the complexity and quantity of data. In addition, these data lack structure, they are volatile and sometimes there is a lot of missing data.

The problem of integrating online and offline marketing strategies which involve many channels such as e-mail advertisements, social media, press, brochures, catalogues, TV, cell phone and the internet among others has to be addressed. It is important to prioritise the coordination of all marketing activities. Online marketing strategies should be done alongside offline marketing strategies. Thus harmonising both approaches to marketing the products and services of a company will help in the attainment of marketing goals. Therefore marketing practitioners should acknowledge the role of integrated marketing communications – since all marketing activities are inextricably linked to each other. When going online all elements of marketing should play complementary roles.

## **5. Rationale for changing from offline to online marketing strategies**

The advent of the digital age has brought about a proliferation of technological innovations in the form of online media. The development of information technology has facilitated the use of e-commerce – which entails the buying and selling of products through the use of the internet. In real terms, online marketing strategies have been invigorated by the advent of social network sites or social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp and Instagram among others. These online media play an important role in online marketing strategies. It is reported that the number of social media users has grown to 3.96 billion in 2022, with Facebook as the leading medium with a subscription base of 2.9 monthly active users [24].

Social media are considered platforms on which users build networks and share information and/or sentiments [25]. Because of their unique nature of being “dynamic, interconnected, egalitarian, and interactive organisms” [26], social media have caused three fundamental changes in the marketplace. First, social media permit companies and customers to associate in ways that were impossible in the past. Such connectedness is allowed by several platforms, such as social networking sites (Facebook), microblogging sites (Twitter), and content communities (YouTube), that permit social networks to be built from shared interests and values [25]. Thus based on the use of social media, organisations have found platforms that cut marketing costs and increase the effectiveness of marketing efforts [27].

The outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic has become an impactful lesson to business practitioners and consumers that business should be done online. It has taught people the importance of doing business online. Based on this, companies have to spend more on social media advertisement and because of the Covid-19 pandemic, people spend more time on social media platforms [28]. Because of the restrictions that Covid-pandemic imposes on consumers, online marketing strategies are offering a better option for informing people about a company’s products and services. For example, Facebook advertisements are less expensive for businesses [29]. Advertisements on Facebook can be appealing and maybe well-designed to meet the needs of a target group.

One of the most important factors that enhance online marketing strategy is that consumers can be provided with timely information due to its availability 24 hours a day, and 7 days a week [30]. Because of this customers can access information and shop online at any time of the day. Thus, there is no limit on time since online businesses do not have opening and closing times. Since online and offline businesses are closely associated consumers may visit the brick and mortar markets after surfing online for suitable prices. For consumers, online purchases bring with them the

advantage that the customer does not go out of the home to visit stores and be burdened by comparing. Comparatively, online marketing strategies are not resources consuming and as such are cost-effective [31]. Even companies that employ these strategies expend less when they launch new advertisements online as compared to placing them in a magazine or on billboards. Since the cost of establishing a virtual presence is less expensive most companies have gone online.

One of the key merits of an online marketing strategy is that it eliminates all geographical limitations from the practice of buying and selling. As long as the internet is available, there is no limit in terms of global reach [32]. Offline marketing strategies had challenges of overcoming geographic barriers, but today marketers can market their products and services to a large clientele base across the globe [33].

Despite the nature of a company online marketing strategies are important as they can assist organisations to position themselves in the market and be able to set themselves apart from competitors. Moving from offline to online marketing strategies is a good opportunity that companies should not avoid despite them keeping operating their brick and mortar facilities [34]. Since most organisations are going online, it is important to discuss if online marketing strategies lead to the creation of customer-based brand equity.

## **6. Online strategies to build brand equity**

Brand equity is a consequence of many factors that include among others initial purchasing experience [35]. It is also important that the product and/or service offer additional value so that strong relationships with the client are developed. This experiential marketing is important in the provision of this value [36]. The value so provided is brand equity, which is discussed in this section, but with an emphasis on how online marketing strategies edify such value from customers' perspective. As the discussion unfolds it is important to note that online marketing strategies similarly create brand equity to offline marketing strategies in that both strategies influence the main sources of brand equity namely brand awareness, brand image and loyalty.

Extant literature shows that social media communication has a significant impact on brand equity as it creates brand awareness. Even though online brand experience, was not regarded as good as offline strategies in creating brand equity [37], it is now crucial in such endeavour. Online marketing strategies permit companies to communicate, create and deliver marketing offerings through social media platforms to keep relationships with a diverse range of stakeholders. By so doing marketers interact, collaborate, and share information with customers [38], because of this as many organisations use social media for advertising and marketing activities, they create value and build brand equity [39]. As companies and consumers interact on social media platforms – the interaction permits the individual's ability to recall and recognise the brand [40]. Thus as a result social influence affects brand equity. For example, activities on social media activities can encourage consumer engagement and help companies to build relationships, brand image and brand value. As participants on the social media platforms share videos and pictures, this may create trust and strong ties with brands which impact brand equity.

Online marketing strategies enhance brand experience which may end up building brand equity. For example, customised digital content facilitates the creation of consumer-brand relationships [41]. It is crucial to note that if an organisation uses this trendy marketing approach and posts stimulating content consumers are more

likely to have long-lasting memories which form the foundation of brand equity. In the same vein, the use of professional pictures helps to motivate the sensory and affective experiences of consumers. In real terms, content marketing is the cornerstone of online marketing strategies which entails the distribution of valuable, relevant and consistent which is meant to attract customers. With proper online content, organisations can attract, keep customers and transform general customers into advocates [42].

One of the most significant aspects of building brand equity is web functionality. Web functionality entails the website design elements that facilitate ease of interaction – which should be user friendly, fun, and enjoyable. The website has to offer several options that may include the speed of the download, 3D images, video and audio which is available 24/7. If the website is properly designed it can create unique and memorable experiences in the minds of the consumers which in turn generates brand awareness and recall. This may in the end create brand loyalty [43]. The website should have navigation aids to reduce the cognitive load, and the steps for search and confusion, this creates additional value for customers.

One of the antecedents of brand equity that marketing practitioners have exploited to build brand equity is e-service quality. Santos [44] defined e-service quality as the assessment and judgement of the customer's experience and how the customer perceives the quality of online services offered by the virtual market. In the initial stages, when an organisation starts selling online products customers may not adapt quickly, but may gradually come aboard depending on the availability of several factors such as website functionality, product attributes, customer e-service and security among others. One of the commonly employed scales to evaluate the quality of online service is the e-service quality scale (ESQUAL) which was proposed by [45] in 2005. The main dimensions of the scale include reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy, and tangibility. Extant literature shows that e-service quality has been studied in association with marketing stimuli, outcome and ultimate behaviour. Scholars have linked e-service quality with several outcomes such as satisfaction, loyalty and behavioural intentions [46].

Satisfaction is one of the determinants of customers based brand equity. In online marketing, such satisfaction is regarded as e-satisfaction. Anderson and Srinivasan [47] defined e-satisfaction as 'the contentment of the customer with respect to his or her prior purchasing experience with a given electronic commerce firm'. This happens after assessing if the gratifications so experienced from online purchases meet the needs and expectations of customers. The understanding of the extent of customer satisfaction is important because satisfaction influences the behaviour of customers on whether they will continue patronising the website or not [48]. According to [49], satisfaction is a result of positive emotional and cognitive states.

A satisfied customer always refers other customers to the websites and remains loyal to the organisation. In addition, e-satisfaction increases traffic to the website and the number of hours spent by customers on the website also increases. Thus the behaviour of online consumers is dependent partly on e-satisfaction. Despite the fact that e-satisfaction is a subjective experience it helps in edifying brand equity. For e-satisfaction to be attained it is expected that the website of the organisation has to be adaptable, interactive, and user-friendly to permit ease of transaction and customer engagement [47]. Studies have shown that e-satisfaction in online companies depends on the website quality and e-service quality, information quality and product quality among others.

E-loyalty is one of the antecedents of brand equity. It refers to the long-run relationship that customers have concerning the brand. Odin et al. [50] define loyalty as the extent to which consumers are committed to the brand and this is shown by the positive attitude and behaviour towards a particular brand. Repeat purchases are one of the indicators of loyalty. Because of the advent of the internet and social media, the concept of brand loyalty is now operational in the online context and it is regarded as e-loyalty. Anderson and Srinivasan [47] e-loyalty refers to a favourable attitude towards an online business, which results in repeat purchases. The same concept has been defined by [51] as a consumer's commitment to revisit an organisation's website without switching to other websites. In the extant literature, brand loyalty is segmented into two categories namely behavioural and cognitive loyalty. When consumers repeat buying brands, this is regarded as behavioural loyalty and cognitive loyalty entails the consumers' intention to purchase the brand as the first choice [19]. Both types of loyalty form the building blocks for brand equity.

In an attempt to build brand equity electronic word of mouth (eWOM) has become one of the tools used by many organisations. The concept of eWOM has been adapted from word of mouth. eWOM has been defined as "all informal communications directed at consumers through internet-based technology related to the usage or characteristics of particular goods and services" [52]. The concept emerged as a result of online technologies that enabled the use of social media platforms such as Facebook, YouTube and WhatsApp among others. The merit that EWOM is that it can reach millions of people who have access to the internet. Because of the unique characteristics of eWOM, it allows web users to create virtual relationships and share a lot of content. As web users share opinions about a company's products and services on social media platforms, in the end, this affects buying behaviour [53]. In instances where positive information is shared the result is that brand equity is edified in the process.

As much as eWOM is quite useful in building brand equity, the same can transmit negative opinions. Negative e-WOM is a strong determinant of consumers' overall attitude towards products and services [54] since it draws more attention than positive information. If such information is shared companies' reputations and images are tarnished. For example when online interaction takes place and negative opinions and comments are made this may end up affecting brand equity negatively. Because of the reach of online marketing approaches, marketing practitioners should be concerned about how best they can minimise the volume of negative reviews on the online platform as a way to reduce harmful effects on brand equity.

## **7. Chapter summary**

The chapter looked at the transition from traditional marketing strategies to online marketing strategies that companies use to build brand equity. The chapter discussed the concepts of offline strategies, online strategies and customer-based brand equity. Offline marketing strategies were described as the use of marketing media such as television, newspapers, billboards and radio among others. Online marketing strategies relate to the use of digital technologies to promote products and services and establish long-term relationships with online users. Customer-based brand equity was discussed from a customer perspective viewpoint where it was summarised as the value that accrues to a customer after using the brand.

A discussion was also done on the number of challenges that are associated with online marketing strategies. Some of the challenges encountered by companies include the lack of trust in the processes, especially from rural consumers and fear of online fraudulent activities that result in customers not using online platforms. More so, the online marketing strategies have affected the traditional business models such that companies have to transform their models so that they are compatible with the online ways of marketing products and services. In adopting online marketing strategies, companies have encountered challenges in managing big data – where a lot of content is shared on social media platforms. Despite the reality that companies go online, they still need to use offline marketing strategies and as such, there is a problem with how best companies can harmonise the two approaches.

Adopting online marketing strategies has been facilitated by technological innovations in the form of the internet and social media. We have seen the birth of platforms such as Facebook, WhatsApp and YouTube among others where virtual communities share information about products and services. Because of the outbreak of Covid-19 business practitioners have been forced to do business online due to the restriction associated with the disease. More importantly, the cost implications are far much less than that of traditional ways of marketing and the fact that the business is open for 24 hours makes the online approach to business a more preferred option.

Despite the fact that brand equity can be built from several factors, not all factors were included, but only a few selected factors. The chapter indicates that social media communication is good at building brand equity; communications unfolds between the company and consumers in an interactive way, where both parties make contributions, unlike the unidirectional way that is common in the traditional approach to communicating. A discussion on the effect of brand experience on brand equity was done. One of the factors that are responsible for building brand equity relates to web functionality, which also entails ease of use and interaction. Among other factors discussed in this chapter is the role of e-service quality, the effect of e-satisfaction and e-loyalty on brand equity. A discussion on the role of eWOM in edifying brand equity was precisely done.

## **8. Limitations and perspectives for future research**

Because of the dynamic nature of the transition from offline to online strategies to market brands, it is important that future research may continually undertake reviews to examine the changes in the domain area. An integrative approach to review the extant literature on the transition from offline to online marketing strategies was done here, it is important that future reviews may take a systematic approach to present, analyse and critique literature.

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# Perspective Chapter: A Systematic Review and Research Agenda on Standardization versus Adaptation of Brand Elements in International Markets

*Tamer Baran*

## Abstract

This paper aims to systematically review and critically examine marketing research on the standardization/adaptation of brand elements and explain its importance, given its increasing influence internationally. 46 journal articles indexed in Scopus and Web of Science databases examine with focus on research theme with broad scope approach, one of the types of literature review. The findings show that there is a live stream about the standardization/adaptation of brand elements in the marketing discipline, and contextual, methodological, and thematic diversity. Moreover, the findings of the review also highlight various literature trends and gaps. Results of the current review offer deep insights and create an ambitious research agenda that raises exciting new research questions for researchers. Besides results help to encourage the development of future theories on international branding.

**Keywords:** branding, brand elements, standardization, adaptation, systematic review

## 1. Introduction

In the last few decades, a significant and major change in terms of globalization has taken place as a result of the liberalization of countries' trade policies, the realization of regional economic integrations, faster flow of goods compared to previous periods, and rapid development in logistics and information and communication technologies [1–3]. Companies with different national origins from almost every sector have caused an increase in the intensity of competition in the globalizing world [4]. Consequently, the problems related to the design of robust branding strategies to compete effectively and efficiently in the international market have been the focus of relevant research. Perhaps the most important reason for this is that the brand is the most valuable asset of a company [5]. For example, BrandZ's report states Amazon's brand value is over \$415 billion, Apple's brand value is over \$350 billion, and Microsoft and Google's brand value are over \$320 billion. Moreover, many brands on the list increase their brand values year by year.

The value of a brand is closely linked to the effective use of brand elements. This is because, through brand elements, companies can create a quality perception, associate their brands with some positive features, and reach a high level of brand recognition [5]. In addition, the brand can have a respectable identity, personality, and a high level of awareness and recognition in the consumers' perspectives [6]. These features will, undoubtedly, give the brand a competitive advantage in the market.

At this point, one of the important issues about branding that international companies need to address is the standardization/adaptation of brand elements in the target market [7]. In international branding, the decision regarding the aforementioned strategies is directly related to the target consumer audience, legal environment, the transferability of the company's marketing skills, and the characteristics of the product [6]. Therefore, international branding is more complicated than local branding [8], and, for this reason, it is not possible to state that standardization/adaptation strategies should be preferred over the other.

Due to the importance of the topic, it has become inevitable for both academics and decision-makers to seek an answer to the question of how to manage brand elements successfully in international markets [7]. In the literature reviews on the topic, some authors [9–11] discussed the topic within the framework of international marketing. On the other hand, in the limited number of systematic literature reviews on branding, some authors [12, 13] studied brand orientation, while others [14, 15] focused on brand loyalty. However, studies failed to attach enough importance to the standardization/adaptation of brand elements. Therefore, the lack of studies on the standardization/adaptation of brand elements draws attention in the literature.

In this context, the present review aimed to consolidate extant research, establish links with different literature studies, identify gaps between and within research streams, and bring together all the components as much as possible. To this end, I conducted a systematic review of research on brand elements to make suggestions for further research. At this point, I specifically aimed to highlight, clarify, rationalize, and interpret the similarities and differences among studies in terms of content and methodology and draw conclusions about future research directions. Since only a limited number of systematic reviews have been conducted on the topic, the current review is expected to make a meaningful and profound contribution to the field.

The paper is organized as follows: the following section provides an overview of the employed review protocols and the rationale behind them. Next, the results of the systematic review are presented. Then, both a descriptive and thematic analysis of the extant literature and show the breadth and depth of the available knowledge are provided. The review is ended with a discussion of the main gaps in the literature that were detected and suggestions for future research directions.

## **2. Methodology**

Despite numerous studies on the standardization/adaptation of brand elements in international marketing literature conducted over the last few decades, no effort has been made to systematically review these studies findings. The present review aimed to examine the studies on the topic comprehensively and systematically reveal the research evidence. In their comprehensive study, [16] categorized review types according to their characteristics and obtained 14 review types, including the systematic literature review (SLR). Accordingly, a SLR is the process of systematically searching for, evaluating, and synthesizing research evidence, often adhering to

guidelines on the conduct of a review. In this type of review, the subject is handled carefully and clearly [17, 18].

SLRs have some important advantages over other review types. An SLR improves the quality of the review process and outputs [19], reduces the level of error in the research and the bias of the researcher [20, 21], increases the validity of the process since the review process is carried out without leaving any details open to interpretation [22], allows the researcher to focus on a specific research area [23], and finally, provides information to the stakeholders in a comprehensive framework [20, 24]. Due to these superior characteristics, studies employing the SLR method in various research areas such as blockchain technology [25], preventive medicine [26], and sustainability [27] have been published in a fairly high number of prestigious journals. For these reasons, the current review, aiming at a comprehensive, valuable, and advanced review of the standardization/adaptation of brand elements, employed the SLR method.

Several approaches have been put forward regarding the stages of a SLR. Tranfield et al. [21] suggested that the SLR process basically consists of three stages: planning the review, conducting a review, and reporting and dissemination. The authors also proposed a total of 10 steps under these three main stages. On the other hand, Khan et al. [28] discussed the stages of a systematic review under five headings: framing questions for a review, identifying relevant work, assessing the quality of studies, summarizing the evidence, and interpreting the findings. Magarey [29] grouped the stages of an SLR under six headings: formulation of a research question, literature search, selection of studies to be included in the review, data extraction, analysis and synthesis, and reporting the results. Vrontis and Christofi [18] employed a 7-step process consisting of the following steps: question formulation, inclusion criteria, search strategy, exclusion criteria, selecting relevant studies, further search processes, and extraction, analysis, and synthesis. One of the most comprehensive definitions of the process belongs to Okoli and Schabram [30]. The authors defined an 8-step guide to conducting an SLR: defining the purpose of the literature review, protocol, and training, searching for the literature, practical screen (inclusion criteria), quality appraisal (exclusion criteria), data extraction, synthesis of studies, writing the review. This review employed the 7-step process proposed by Vrontis and Christofi [18].

### **3. SLR process**

#### **3.1 Question formulation**

Although some authors [18, 28, 30] define this stage with different words, the point on which all authors agree is that the most important step for an SLR, as in all research in the field of marketing [31–34], is the formulation of the research question. Formulating the research question clearly plays a key role in the success of the research as it shapes the future stages of the research. While formulating the research question of the present review, I focused on the standardization/adaptation of brand elements. Following Vrontis and Christofi [18] and collaborating with marketing researchers who have studied on the topic, I formulated the research question: What is the main focus of studies on the standardization/adaptation of brand elements in the marketing literature?

#### **3.2 Inclusion criteria**

Vrontis and Christofi, Dada and Wang and Chung [18, 20, 22] applied three inclusion criteria to decide which studies to include in their systematic review: (1) to

determine the search boundaries; (2) to identify the search strings, and; (3) to specify the search timeframe. In this review, I employed the first two criteria: to determine the search boundaries and to identify the search strings. Considering the previous SLRs, some authors [35, 36] conducted the SLR process on a journal basis whereas many other authors [17–20] conducted their review on a database basis. Since the database-based process is preferred more in SLRs, the present review followed this process. In the studies mentioned above, the researchers focused on EBSCOhost Business Source Complete, ScienceDirect, and Emerald databases but overlooked Web of Science (WoS) and Scopus databases. For this reason, WoS and Scopus databases formed the boundaries of this review. Furthermore, following the suggestions put forward by Kauppi et al. [23], I created a comprehensive list of search terms related to the research topic. My purpose here was to minimize the possibility of excluding search terms related to the research topic. As stated above, I did not specify a specific search timeframe; therefore, I included all the studies on the topic, regardless of when they were conducted. I did this to eliminate the possibility of excluding important studies on the topic.

### **3.3 Search strategy**

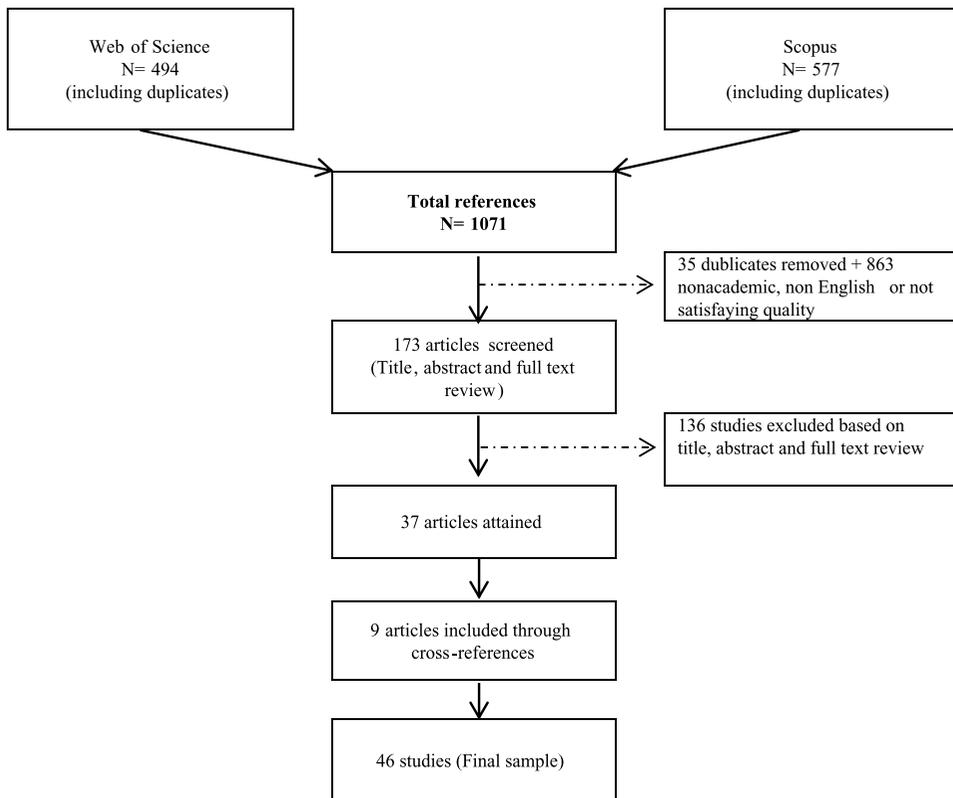
Khan et al. [28] state that researchers can use at this stage many criteria as research criteria such as title, abstract, full text, keywords, language, category, words other than keywords, etc. At this point, the researcher has the freedom to choose data sources and selection criteria [35]. In this context, the present review used all of the criteria mentioned above, and the first review was conducted to cover all relevant studies. I identified the search terms following [7]. These authors found that standardization and adaptation are stated with different terms in marketing terminology. Accordingly, some authors [37–40] used the term “standardization,” while others (e.g., [1, 2, 41–44]) used the term “globalization.” Also, some authors (e.g., [1, 3, 45–49]) used the term “adaptation,” while some others (e.g., [2, 3, 50, 51]) used the term “customization.” Apart from these, some authors [48, 52–54] preferred the British spelling of “standardization” (“standardization”), “globalization” (“globalization”) [55, 56] and “customization” (“customization”) [52, 57, 58]. In this review, I used all the terms mentioned above in the database search to minimize the possibility of missing the studies on the topic.

On the other hand, the brand elements forming this review’s topic were collected in three groups name, symbol, and slogan by Aaker [5] and Kotler and Keller [59]. Moreover, the symbol element consists of the components of logos, packaging, human, scenes, and cartoon characters. On the other hand, regarded name, slogan, symbol, logo, packaging, and character as well as URL and jingle as brand elements [6]. Kapferer [60] defined brand elements as name, slogan, symbol, logo, packaging, brand character, and color and sound. In the present review, as brand elements, I used the keywords of name, slogan, symbol, logo, packaging, and character, on which the above-mentioned authors agree, to identify the studies on brand elements. Thus, not only did I cover the studies on the topic at a maximum level but also determined the boundaries of the review.

Accordingly, I formulated the following search formula: (brand) AND (name OR slogan OR symbol OR logo OR packag\* OR character) AND (standardi\* OR globali\* OR adaptation OR customi\*). My first search with the inclusion criteria yielded a total of 1571 (Scopus, 577; WoS, 494) articles in databases.

### 3.4 Exclusion criteria

The sample of related studies that emerged after the first search was in need of a new appraisal to further clarify the most relevant studies. In this context, I followed the suggestions of various authors. First of all, although the field of the current review was business, the first sample contained articles from many different fields (e.g., environmental science, dermatology, pharmaceutical science, civil engineering, etc.). For this reason, following Khan et al.'s [28] suggestions, I selected the category of business. Next, following advanced SLR studies [35, 61], I selected full-text articles. Thus, I was able to exclude non-academic studies such as reviews, conference papers, book chapters, and books. As a result of the second exclusion, I noticed that there were articles in languages other than English (e.g., French, Russian, Chinese, Spanish, Portuguese, etc.). Therefore, in the third exclusion step, I excluded non-English articles. I did this for two reasons: Firstly, I do not know the mentioned languages, and secondly, and more importantly, I wanted to focus on a common scientific knowledge base represented by the majority of prestigious scientific journals [23]. Thus, I accessed a total of 208 articles (Scopus, 131; WoS, 77), including duplicate records. As a result of the detection and removal of duplicate records, the two databases yielded a total of 173 articles on my research topic.



**Figure 1.**  
*Research process.*

### **3.5 Identifying relevant studies**

I completed carefully the inclusion and exclusion processes described above. Next, adhering to the processes of Nolan and Garawan [62], I first examined the titles and then the abstracts of the new list that emerged. At this point, I preferred not to comply with very strict rules. In other words, without stipulating a condition such that the titles of the studies fully or partially fit the research question of this review, I tried to identify the studies that would help explain the topic as much as possible. I excluded the studies that were not related to both standardization/adaptation and brand elements. By doing so, I aimed to include articles that would contribute to developing an insight into the standardization/adaptation of brand elements, even though they focused on other topics. Subsequently, I started the full-text review process. The full-text review process yielded a total of 37 articles that I deemed appropriate to be included in the review.

After this stage, I carefully examined all selected studies reference lists and tried to identify major relevant studies that I had failed to include in the review. Cross-referencing helped me to retrieve nine more articles, thus increasing the number of studies to 46.

**Figure 1** demonstrates the research process steps of the current review detailed above.

The remainder of the paper focuses on mapping the field by making use of the descriptive and thematic analysis obtained from the final list resulting from the systematic review and reporting the findings in an integrative framework. In the analysis stage, Gaur and Kumar's [35] "focus on research theme with broad scope" approach, one of the types of literature review, was used. Accordingly, the findings of selected articles reviewed by two academics with Ph.D. degrees in marketing were presented.

## **4. Findings**

### **4.1 Descriptive findings**

The analysis of the existing literature on standardization/adaptation in international branding contributed to the determination of the focus of the relevant studies and the gaps in the literature and the development of suggestions for future research directions. This section reports the publication outlets from which the data were collected, fields of research, year of publication, the type of articles published, author's characteristics, and industrial analysis of the reviewed papers to provide a preliminary map of the existing literature and identify possible gaps that need further research.

### **4.2 Studies by year of publication, type of paper, and methods**

According to **Table 1**, which outlines the studies by year of publications, there has been an increase in studies on standardization/adaptation in branding since the 2000s. Studies on the topic reached a peak in 2015 ( $n = 4$ ). Although the topic started to be studied by academics more than 30 years ago, the number of studies has been increasing recently. The number of studies on standardization/adaptation in branding has increased significantly in the second decade compared to the previous decade (30% increase compared to the first decade). Moreover, approximately 30% of the studies have been carried out in the last five years. This indicates that researchers interest in the topic has increased over the years, and the research area has evolved. The review yielded that the listed articles were published in a wide range of journals. The studies were mainly (46%,  $n = 21$ ) published in marketing journals, followed by

Years	JIBM	JBM	JBR	JBS	EJM	JM	IBR	JAPC	JBR	JintM	MSQ	SB	GBER	IJA	SS	JIM	MRR	MS	IJRM	BJM	JBIM	IJM	JMC	SD	JCM	Total
1989	1																									1
1994					1																					1
1997																							1			1
2001		1																								1
2002																1						1	1			3
2004	1						1																			2
2005				1	1																			1		3
2007					1						1										1					3
2008								1					1													2
2009			2											1												3
2010					1								1													3
2011	1					1																				3
2012									1																	1
2013										1										1						2
2014																						1				3
2015	2																1									4
2016																										1
2017	1																								1	3
2018																										1
2019	1						1						1													3
2020																										2

Years	JPBM	JTB	IJEER	IMR	JBM	JoBM	JBS	EJM	JM	IBR	JAPC	JBR	JmtM	MSQ	SB	GBER	IJA	SS	JIM	MRR	MS	IJRM	BJM	JBIM	IJM	JMC	SD	JCM	Total
6	1	1	1	5	3	1	1	3	2	1	1	2	1	1	1	1	2	1	1	1	2	1	1	1	1	2	1	1	46

**Notes:** JPBM, Journal of Product and Brand Management; JTB, Journal of Teaching in International Business; IJEER, International Journal of E-Business Research; IMR, International Marketing Review; IBM, Journal of Brand Management; JoBM, Journal of Bank Marketing; JBS, Journal of Bank Marketing; JIBS, Journal of International Business Studies; EJM, European Journal of Marketing; JM, Journal of Marketing; IBR, International Business Review; JAPC, Journal of Asian Pacific Communications; JBR, Journal of Business Research; JmtM, Journal of Interactive Marketing; MSQ, Managing Service Quality; SB, Service Business; GBER, Global Business and Economic Review; IJA, International Journal of Advertising; SS, Social Semiotics; JIM, Journal of International Marketing; MRR, Management Research Review; MS, Marketing Science; IJRM, International Journal of Research in Marketing; BJM, Baltic Journal of Management; JBIM, Journal of Business and Industrial Marketing; IJM, International Journal of Marketing; JMC, Journal of Marketing Communications; SD, Strategic Direction; JCM, Journal of Consumer Marketing.

<sup>1</sup> Till the end of June 2020.

**Table 1.** Distribution of studies by years and journals.<sup>1</sup>

Authors' characteristics	Number	%
Number of authors		
1	7	15
2	13	28
3	15	33
4 and more	11	24
Number of countries		
1	29	63
2	11	24
3	4	9
No info	2	4

**Table 2.**  
*Authors' information of studies.*

brand-related journals (20%, n = 9). Seven studies (15%) were published in journals on general business, and others (20%, n = 9) were published in journals focused on different fields. The journal with the highest number of published studies on the topic (13%, n = 6) was the *Journal of Product and Brand Management*, followed by *International Marketing Review* (11%, n = 5).

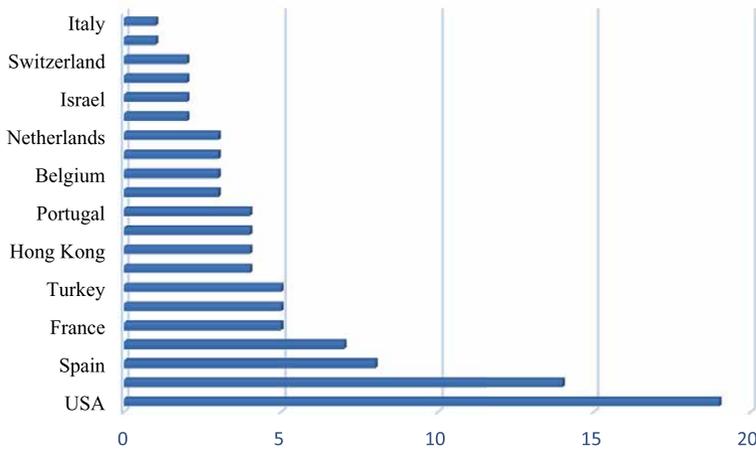
### 4.3 Studies by the number of authors and authorship origin

As can be inferred from **Table 2** indicating the number of authors of the studies, the studies with a single author constituted the least number (15%, n = 7). In other words, most of the studies were conducted by more than one author, and the highest number (33%, n = 15) belonged to the studies conducted by three authors. Moreover, the majority of the studies (63%, n = 29) were conducted by researchers from the same country. The lowest rate (9%, n = 4) among the studies that included information about the authorship origin belonged to those published by academics from three different countries.

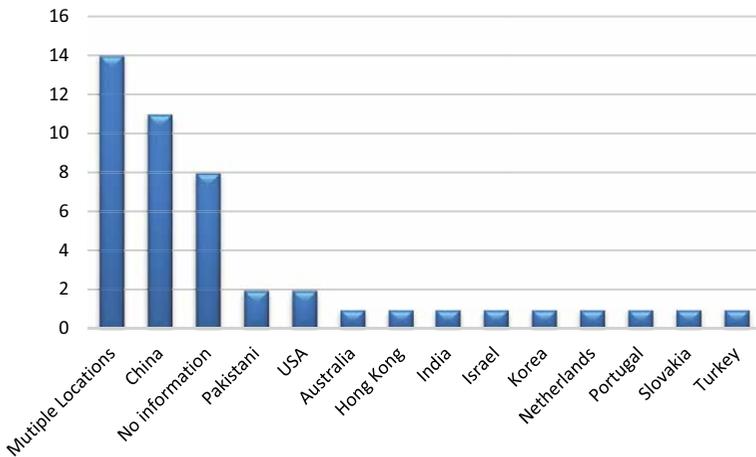
As regards the authorship origin, authors from the USA were in the first place (n = 19), followed by Australia (n = 14), Spain (n = 8), and China (n = 7) (**Figure 2**). In addition, considering the regions from which author contributions come from, the majority of authors (46%, n = 47) come from Europe, followed by America (21%, n = 22), Asia (18%, n = 19), and Australia (15%, n = 15).

### 4.4 Studies by geographic coverage

According to **Figure 3**, where the studies are presented in terms of geographic coverage, most of the studies (30%, n = 14) are based in more than one country. As can be inferred from the figure, the geographic coverage is narrow in studies based in a single country. Most of the studies based in a single country were conducted in China (24%, n = 11), followed by the USA (4%) and Pakistan (4%), with two studies each. Studies based in a single country focused on five countries (11%), both from Europe and Asia each. On the other hand, Australia was examined in only one study (2%), while the African continent was completely ignored. In fact, none of the studies



**Figure 2.**  
*Origins of studies' authors.*



**Figure 3.**  
*Geographical coverage of the studies.*

focused on Central Asia and the Middle East. Finally, eight studies (17%) included no information about their geographic coverage.

#### 4.5 Thematic analysis

As part of SLR, thematic analysis develops an integrative perspective on the focus of relevant research [17]. In this context, in this review, following Aakers approach [5], three themes, namely name, symbol, and slogan, related to international branding, were determined. Since some authors [5, 60] divide the symbol into three sub-themes, namely, logo, packaging, and character, this review also considered these three sub-themes, thus increasing the number of elements to five. Appendix A presents the studied articles according to their themes. As can be inferred from the table, a majority of the studies focus on the brand name, followed by studies on

multiple brand elements. On the other hand, none of the reviewed studies focuses solely on the slogan.

Appendix B describes the sectors on which the studies are focused. 30% of the reviewed articles contain no information regarding the studied sector due to either their nature (conceptual study, literature review, etc.) or failure to specify the topic. On the other hand, those that mention the studied sector mostly focus on more than one sector (28%,  $n = 13$ ). Besides, those that focused on a single sector were mostly (11%,  $n = 5$ ) conducted in the context of consumer goods.

Following this, the review on each of these themes revolved around the main research focus of the reviewed articles. Findings of the current study show that studies on the topic mostly deal with consumer behavior towards different brand elements. For example, some studies [63–65] aimed to determine the effect of the brand name on consumer behaviors, while others [66] sought to determine the effect of the packaging on consumer behaviors. On the other hand, the most studied topic is standardization and adaptation in branding. At this point, some researchers [67] focused solely on standardization in branding, while others [68, 69] focused solely on adaptation. In addition, some of the studies on the field discussed the topic more specifically and dealt only with the standardization or adaptation of brand elements. For example, Alashban et al. [70] and Okazaki [71] examined the standardization of the brand name, whereas Barnes et al. [72], Usunier, and Shaner [73] studied the adaptation of the brand name. Khan et al. [74] investigated the standardization of symbols, another brand element, while Khan et al. [75] studied the adaptation of the packaging. The analysis also yielded cross-cultural studies, one of the important topics of international branding. In this context, some authors [76, 77] dealt with the topic from a broader perspective, while others [78] investigated it in the context of packaging, which is one of the brand elements. Furthermore, some studies [79, 80] tried to reveal the relationship between brand elements and the country of origin in the context of consumer behaviors.

On the other hand, it was found that some issues related to the topic were not addressed in the reviewed studies. For example, the effects of positioning in international branding [81], and branding on firm performance [82] were each the topic of only one study.

#### **4.6 Gaps for future research directions**

This section is devoted to the gaps thought to guide future research (in terms of theory, methodology, authorship, and scope) in hopes of helping future studies. I believe that these research gaps will provide fruitful research avenues for further research.

##### *4.6.1 Theory*

As a result of the present review, several issues emerged in terms of theory. First of all, though some authors have contributed to the field using several theories (brand name standardization/adaptation, consumer behavior, etc.), some issues related to international branding still lack a clear theoretical basis. Our finding is similar to and supports previous studies in other fields (e.g., [83–85]). Therefore, I suggest that academics studying the standardization/adaptation of brand elements should focus on studies that are blended with other disciplines such as sociology, psychology, etc.,

where the ideas and theories in these disciplines are used more, and they should try to present a wider perspective.

Second, the reviewed studies give little coverage to Aaker's [5] brand equity and Keller's [6] brand elements, which are generally accepted in the literature. Brand loyalty and perceived quality concepts were encountered in a few studies [5], whereas brand elements were almost never encountered [6]. Therefore, it is recommended that future research focus on brand association, brand awareness, brand identity, brand personality, brand recognition, and brand recall.

Third, when the suggestions for future research were evaluated in terms of literature themes, it was found that the studies focused on a certain theme, as was seen in previous reviews [83]. A significant portion of the studies [63–65, 68, 69, 72, 86] was found to focus on the brand name while those on symbols were found to focus on the packaging [74, 78, 87]. Our findings reveal that the literature still needs studies on slogans, logos, and characters. Therefore, I anticipate that studies on standardization/adaptation related to these elements, which will be supported by different theories, will attract significant attention.

Additionally, our findings showed that the standardization/adaptation of brand elements in international marketing concentrates especially on China in terms of cultural theory but fails to notice different cultures. For this reason, it is recommended that scholars who are interested in the topic carry out studies to reveal the perspectives of consumers from different cultures.

#### *4.6.2 Methodology*

The results of the current review highlight the obvious insufficiency of qualitative research on the topic. It is probable that the main reason for this insufficiency is the difficulties in analyzing the data obtained through the qualitative research design. However, information obtained through various approaches is needed to reach more in-depth information about standardization/adaptation in branding, which is predicted to make important contributions to the field. Identifying the antecedents and successors of the complex structures of the topic and adding them to the existing knowledge base and valid research methods require significantly more qualitative inquiry.

#### *4.6.3 Authorship*

The findings of the review may lead to the interpretation that South American and African authors have made no contributions to the field. It is obvious that studies to be carried out by South American and African writers in their own regions or in other regions with international cooperation will enrich the field.

As stated above, researchers from the USA and Australia make up more than half of the total authors. Therefore, I recommend that researchers from other countries conduct research and enrich the field. Moreover, it was found that co-authorship was not at a sufficient level in the reviewed studies, and most of the studies were carried out by academics from the same country. For this reason, this finding presented an important opportunity for international authors on the topic. In this context, I believe that studies to be carried out by researchers from different cultures and different continents or regions will make significant contributions to the field.

#### 4.6.4 Context

*Industrial focus:* First, most of the reviewed articles clearly support the literature on the manufacturing industry. Therefore, there is an obvious need for studies that can reveal more findings related to the service sector to generalize the results of the reviewed studies. Second, although there has been an increase in the number of studies focusing on more than one sector, studies comparing different sectors will always maintain their importance in every period. This is because cross-sectorial differences are subject to inconsistencies between the findings of studied sectors and those of other sectors [17]. Therefore, conducting research to compare sectors that have not been studied in the literature is an important opportunity that the present review offers researchers. Third, the studies on the topic conducted so far have focused on consumer goods. Hence, examining a wide variety of industry contexts and a better understanding of the relationships between models through analysis at the sectoral level are expected to enrich the literature.

*Geographical scope:* Undoubtedly, one of the important factors that make a theory robust is the test of applicability in the context of different geography and development levels and the comparability of findings. In this direction, developing economies cover a wide variety of countries in terms of both their geographical locations and development levels. Considering our findings in this context, the researchers, who planned to address the standardization/adaptation of brand elements at a single country level, focused on the USA and Australia but overlooked developing economies such as Brazil, Russia, and India, which are defined as BRIC. It was seen that the country among the developing economies that received the most focus was China. Similarly, regarding MINT countries, no studies focused on Mexico, Indonesia, and Nigeria, whereas only one study was conducted in the context of Turkey. The findings of the present review revealed that future research to be conducted in these countries would fill an important gap in the literature.

One of the most important points in international branding is cultural influences and consumers reactions in different cultures to the standardization/adaptation of brand elements [76, 77]. When our findings are considered from a cultural perspective, China attracts the most attention in the studies. This is acceptable from a cultural perspective as China hosts one of the worlds most interesting cultures. However, apart from China, it was seen that India, the Middle East, the African continent, and Northern European countries such as Sweden and Norway failed to attract enough attention. Although the highest number of studies in the geographic context belongs to the studies comparing countries, the fact that these studies did not focus sufficiently on the above-mentioned cultures stands as an important opportunity for researchers who want to enrich the literature. Doing so will also help companies find an answer to the question of what kind of strategy they should implement in different cultures.

Based on the above comments, an important gap that emerged as a result of the review is the tendency to focus on relatively few regions and countries. Over-focusing on contexts such as China, the US, and Europe can lead to false generalizations about other contexts, about which I still know very little. The extant literature obviously reveals invaluable information on the topic. However, studies in geographic areas such as Brazil, Russia, India, Mexico, Indonesia, Nigeria, Turkey, and even Japan, which have been researched in only a small number of studies, are likely to reveal new theoretical developments and novel insights into the topic. Moreover, the field deserves to be enriched in the context of these regions. In this context, to expand the

geographic coverage of the field, I recommend reaching out to academics or industry stakeholders from countries where research is planned, who are likely to have a deeper contextual understanding and can assist scholars in accessing data that is often difficult to retrieve in such countries.

## **5. Conclusion and limitations**

### **5.1 Theoretical contributions**

First of all, the current review is the first systematic review of studies on the standardization/adaptation of brand elements in the field of international marketing. In this regard, the review has the potential to substantially enrich and expand the literature on the standardization/adaptation of brand elements. Further, systematic approaches to the topic are still very limited. As emphasized by some scholars (e.g. [88]), systematic reviews contribute to resolving definitional ambiguities and outlining the scope of the topic, offer an integrated, synthesized overview of the current state of knowledge, identify inconsistencies in prior findings and potential explanations, appraise extant methodological approaches with unique insights, present conceptual frameworks related to previous research, and describe existing gaps and future research directions. Similarly, this review mapped research on the standardization/adaptation of brand elements, structured results from the extant literature, and provided unique and general insights that allowed for an easier and better understanding of the relevant literature.

Secondly, the present systematic review made a substantial contribution to the identification of theoretical synthesis and development opportunities on the topic. Moreover, given that the strength of using the systematic review approach is to provide a solid evidence basis for future research directions, I hope that researchers interested in this topic will use this work as a basis for further expanding the research on the standardization/adaptation of brand elements.

Thirdly, the results of this review highlight a number of knowledge gaps to be filled by future research regarding the following purposes: developing a stronger theoretical basis on the topic, achieving a better contextual positioning, and adapting methodologies that are more exploratory in nature. These arguments can lay the groundwork for the emergence of research that can make significant contributions to the development of the field because the gaps highlighted in the literature reveal the issues overlooked in previous studies on the standardization/adaptation of brand elements. Such an analysis can at least provide a more holistic understanding of the nature of research on standardization/adaptation of brand elements and encourage conceptual expansion and empirical research in a field of review that may have more theoretical and practical relevance than ever before.

### **5.2 Contributions to practice**

Besides significant insights on theory, our findings also make important contributions to practice. Most importantly, our review contributes to determining appropriate strategies in the context of the standardization/adaptation process of brand elements in geographical, cultural, etc. For example, should decision-makers prefer standardization by using the brand image in different cultures, such as the Far East, Middle East, Europe, USA, etc., or should they prefer adaptation by considering

differences in different geographies? Moreover, what strategies to be used for consumers of countries with different levels of development will provide more benefits to the company? Decision-makers can determine the best strategy by considering the findings of this review.

In conclusion, I hope that, with this review, researchers can be encouraged working and planning to work in the field to appreciate the rich data of previous research. Through the relevant structures that I uncovered using the process in the review, I think it would be beneficial for new ideas to benefit from the present review.

### 5.3 Limitations

As with all studies, this review has a number of limitations, which should be considered when examining the findings. First of all, since the focus of this review was previous research on the standardization/adaptation of brand elements, I did not provide detailed recommendations linking the elements, which would be the logical next step. Second, this review covered studies indexed in certain databases: Web of Science and Scopus databases, which seemed to have been overlooked in previous reviews, were reviewed. Although I tried to eliminate this problem as much as possible by thoroughly examining the reference lists in the articles included in the review, I may have still failed to observe studies indexed in databases outside of these databases. Third, I used certain keywords to identify the studies to be examined. Doing so may have potentially led us to miss some relevant research. Nevertheless, I believe that our rigorous systematic review process reduces the likelihood that the studies that were unintentionally left out contain information that would critically change our results. Finally, I carried out the analysis process only thematically, in line with Gaur and Kumar's [35] classification. Moreover, our approach was carried out in light of one of the thematic classifications. This, in turn, inevitably resulted in the failure to evaluate some of the information in the studied studies.

## A. Research themes of reviewed papers

Themes	Papers	n	%
Theme 1: Name	Alashban et al. [70], Baptista [89], Barnes et al. [72], Chan [68], Cheng and Yeung [63], Chiang [76], Dawar and Parker [90], Dong and Holmes [91], Fetscherin et al. [64], Francis et al. [86], Gao et al. [65], Jiang [92], Kuehl and Mantau [93], Miranda and Konya [94], Ranchhod et al. [79], Rosen et al. [69], Samiee et al. [80], Sang and Zhang [95], Timmor and Zif [96], Usunier and Shaner [73]	21	46
Theme 2: Slogan	—	—	0
Theme 3: Symbol	3a: Character	Hofer [82], Zhou et al. [97]	2 4
	3b: Logo	Torres et al. [98]	1 2
	3c: Package	Celhay et al. [78], Horská et al. [87], Khan et al. [66], Khan et al. [74, 75]	5 11
Theme 4: Multiple elements	Agrawal et al. [99], De Meulenaer et al. [100], Erdogmus et al. [77], He and Lu Wang [67] Jiménez-Asenjo and Filipescu [101], Jeong et al. [102], Jorda' -Albin`ana et al. [103], Kadirov et al. [104], Okazaki [71], Paliwoda and Slater [53], Punyatoya et al. [105], Schuh [106], Steenkamp and Geyskens [107].	13	28

## B. Industrial analysis of studies

Industry	Study(ies)
Automotive	Fetscherin et al. [64], Kuehnl and Mantau [93]
Banking	Cheng and Yeung [63], Ranchhod et al. [79]
Consumer goods	Agrawal et al. [99], Dawar and Parker [90], Jorda'-Albinãna et al. [103], Schuh [106], Steenkamp and Geyskens [107]
Cosmetic	Barnes et al. [72]
Food	Horská et al. [87], Khan et al. [74, 75]
Luxury retailing	Liu et al. [108]
Media	Chiang [76].
Mining	Baptista [89]
Mixed	De Meulenaer et al. [100], Dong and Holmes [91], Freeman et al. [109], He and Wang [77], Hofer [82], Jeong et al. [102], Jiang [92], Khan et al. [66], Khan et al. [74, 75], Okzaki [71], Rosen [69], Timmor and Zif [96], Torres et al. [98]
Movie	Gao et al. [65]
No information	Akaka and Alden [81], Alashban et al. [70], Chan [68], Erdogmus et al. [67], Francis et al. [86], Kadirov et al. [104], Miceli et al. [110], Miranda and Konya [94], Paliwoda and Slater [53], Punyatoya et al. [105], Samiee et al. [80], Sang and Zhang [95], Usunier and Shaner [73], Zhou et al. [97]
Wine	Celhay et al. [78], Jiménez-Asenjo and Filipescu [101]

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Section 3

Perspectives of the Topic

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## Chapter 5

# Perspective Chapter: Living the Brand

*Michelle Wolfswinkel and Carla Enslin*

### Abstract

The way employees embody brand purpose and values build or erode the brand's equity. It is people who bring the brand to life as they interact with brand stakeholders across brand contact points over time. Traditionally, brand management is concerned with the corporate and customer-facing brands. Inside organizations, the functional ownership of the employer and internal brand often resides with human resources management, with brand management having varying levels of involvement. Yet it is the employer and internal brand that defines the brand's culture organization wide, straddling the theoretical domains of business, brand, marketing, corporate communication, human resources, talent management and more. In this chapter, we'll explore the nature and purpose of the employer and internal brand, discuss approaches to the alignment thereof, and propose ways in which a strategically aligned leadership team can ensure brand alignment, co-creation, loyalty and advocacy through people living the brand.

**Keywords:** brand, employer brand, internal brand, corporate brand, strategic brand management

### 1. Introduction

Brands are dependent upon people to bring the brand to life. A brand is so much more than a symbol, sign or name that distinguishes one brand from another in the marketplace. We know that brands evoke deeply personal reactions from people – reactions based on their knowledge of the brand, experience and associations with it [1]. Today's top brands rely on their employees to live the brand purpose and values in their daily work, and in so doing, bring the intangible to life in a tangible way [2]. Given the potential that resides in employees to make or break a brand through the ways in which they portray the brand, it is imperative that brand management are invested in the strategic brand management of the employer brand and internal brand, and that cross-functional leadership across brand, human resources and line management realize and revere their role in building the brand through people [3].

The field of strategic brand building has pivoted almost completely from being product-led to being brand-led. A holistic stakeholder orientation is key to being brand-led. While former brand building attempts may have predominantly focused on the product or service features and benefits from a customer marketing perspective, a brand-led stakeholder orientation sees the brand focusing on its unique value as it is co-created by a collaborative of internal and external brand stakeholders in its

ecosystem [4]. Brand-led organizations have come to realize that their performance and ability to sustain the organizational purpose over time depends entirely on meaningful participative stakeholder relationships [5]. Systemically, such an ecosystem of stakeholder relations depends in essence on those leading and employed by the brand. More specifically, the deep commitment to lead and serve the brand inspires and sustains relationships with other stakeholders – from suppliers to top talent to customers [6]. We believe that the relationship between the brand and its employees is central to strategic brand building. The brand's success depends on the degree to which employees identify with and internalize the brand's purpose and portray its values through their behavior in all decisions and actions at each and every touchpoint with other stakeholders [7].

'Living the brand' may be a term that's familiar, overused even, but it beautifully encapsulates both the action and the consequence of employees behaving and acting in ways that are aligned to the brand purpose and values, thereby breathing life into everything the brand stands for and holds dear. As Interbrand's latest global research report confirms, leadership teams find it challenging to identify and craft a unique and compelling and authentic purpose. However, what they find remarkably hard is ensuring that it is served. A meaningful daily lived brand reality would see all employees delivering on-brand not because they must, but because they genuinely want to [8].

**We explain the term 'living the brand' as follows for the purpose of this book chapter:**

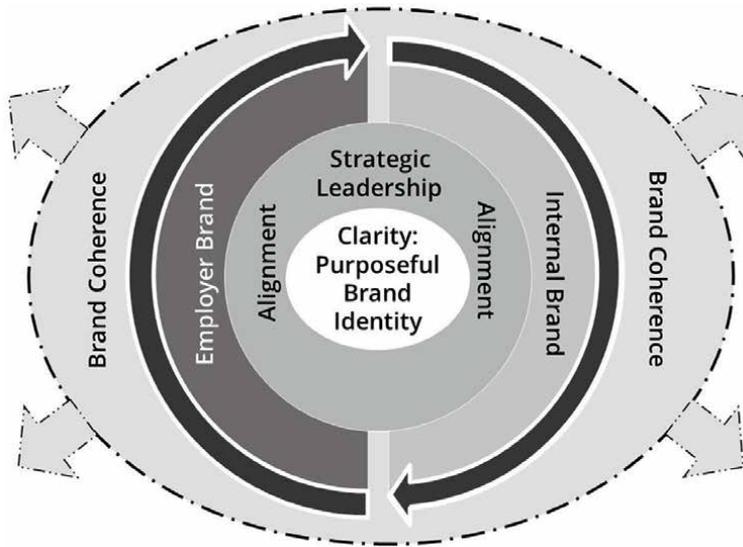
*Living the brand is the output of brand-aligned behaviors and high levels of brand engagement by employees during the course of their daily work [9].*

The input required for this output of 'living the brand' is strategic brand building centered on employees as a major brand stakeholder, the alignment of employer and internal brands to the overall brand, and the strategic alignment of cross-functional leadership in support of employees living the brand's purpose and values [2, 10].

In this chapter we are concerned with the strategic brand building foundations required for 'living the brand', providing brand management, human resources management and line management with foundational guidelines, principles and practices to ultimately deliver the output of employees that bring the brand to life and build brand strength.

Positioned as a perspective on the field of study, the research methodology draws on a synthesis of the current state of literature through a critical or integrative review of literature pertaining to the employer brand, internal brand and employee brand experience and engagement. In particular, the review features the findings and proposed frameworks put forth in two articles published in peer reviewed journals by the authors: the findings of a study exploring the use of brand building practices to attract and retain talent in top brands [6], and further insights from this study which examines the role of the corporate brand in talent attraction and retention [11]. The perspective provided is also informed by the findings from an rigorous literature review that integrates the work of 118 literature sources, including seminal authors and prominent studies in the field of employer branding, internal branding, brand consistency and coherence, and employee engagement and experience [12].

The chapter unfolds according to the following diagram, which depicts the foundational guidelines that organizational leadership should follow to ensure that employees are positioned with integrity, driven to live the brand, as well as helpful



**Figure 1.**  
*Foundational guidelines for living the brand.*

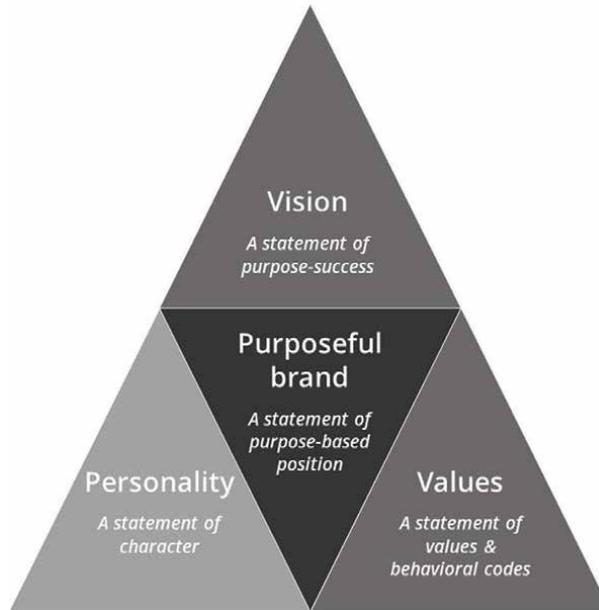
principles and practices that will strengthen the employee-brand relationship and motivate brand-aligned behaviors and brand engagement in employees.

A brief overview of the foundational guidelines for living the brand presented in **Figure 1**: at the center of the figure is the fundamental starting point of all strategic brand building, namely gaining clarity about the brand's reason for existence – the brand purpose and overarching identity. Once a unique, compelling and authentic brand identity has been clearly documented as leaderships' commitment to stakeholders, strategic leadership alignment is required (depicted in **Figure 1** as the gray circle around the purposeful brand identity). This strategic leadership alignment then pulls through to the many different brand building platforms and contact or touchpoints, across the brand's ecosystem by developing and investing in the employer brand and the internal brand, as shown in **Figure 1**. Congruent brand building across the employer, internal and other brand building platforms yields brand coherence, shown in **Figure 1** as the space within which all brand building is held. This presents a perfect launch pad for implementing the principles and practices that is provided herein for living the brand.

## 2. Clarity: purposeful brand identity as the starting point for living the brand

The starting point of all strategic brand building is a clearly articulated brand identity system [1], comprised of, a purposeful brand positioning upheld by a particular personality and value set and working towards a meaningful long-term vision (see **Figure 2**) [13, 14].

Once developed and documented, the brand identity system is often referred to as a brand book, manual or guide. As such, it also presents clear guidelines on how the brand identity elements mentioned above come to life in visual and verbal language, such as the brand name and logo, the tagline or strapline and perhaps a brand mantra to guide and nurture the internal brand culture [14]. Contemporary brands are



**Figure 2.**  
*Purposeful brand identity system [13].*

furthermore clear on how the brand's identity system manifests in daily behaviors and how these 'on-brand' behaviors are valued and lived in dedicated units, departments, processes, systems, roles or functions [6, 13, 14]. Of significance to this chapter is that a brand's identity system serves at the heart of the brand-led organization and informs all employer brand building [2, 15].

An ill developed or defined brand identity system potentially leads to misinterpretation and brand behavior that erodes purposeful brand building. Founders and leaders should take responsibility for capturing the brand identity in clear and committed terms [4, 14]. Given the brand-led argument presented in the introduction to this chapter, the brand identity system presents the brand's purpose and commitment to stakeholders. It holds leaders focused and accountable and it guides and supports every employee and for that matter every other key stakeholder in the behavioral significance of their role and contribution. As such a brand identity system ultimately informs every decision and action within the brand's ecosystem – from mergers and acquisitions to new product development or stakeholder alliances and from internal to external brand communication campaigns [14, 16]. Given the focus of this chapter, it should serve as a constant guide and source of inspiration to the employer brand and internal brand.

While a clear and committed brand identity system seems to be a logical point of departure, and leadership and management may believe that the brand's meaning is clearly articulated and coherently communicated, research suggests otherwise. In organizations that remain predominantly product or service and customer-marketing oriented the brand identity system may be functionally assigned to the marketing department for brand building purposes, with the rest of the company having limited understanding of and exposure to the brand and its purpose strategy [2]. Recent studies also show that brand management have limited or varying involvement with their human resources counterparts' brand building to attract and retain talented

employees. As such, employees may be experiencing vague or inconsistent brand building, which dilutes the brand's purpose and potential [6, 16, 17].

### **3. Strategic leadership alignment and living the brand**

With a clear and committed brand identity system in place, strategic leadership alignment is required to ensure that the brand is congruently instilled in the brand's culture, engaging employees and other stakeholders. Strategic leadership alignment requires leaders from cross-functional organizational areas adopting and supporting the brand and committing to leadership behaviors that uphold all that the brand stands for and promises [10, 14].

Leaders have an important role to play in modeling brand aligned behaviors to employees, and constantly returning to the navigational guidelines in the brand identity system to inform their own and others' daily work decisions, actions and deliverables [2, 9].

For employees to be able to live the brand, strategic leadership need to be aligned in terms of what living the brand means in their own context, how they will motivate and encourage employees to live the brand, hold themselves and others accountable, reward or recognize those who live the brand well, and reinforce employee engagement and loyalty to the brand [4, 9, 17].

It is among the leadership of brand led organizations that we note the rise and growth of participative leadership philosophies and cultures. A leadership and management team committed to the unique value delivered by the brand is also deeply aware that such value is co-created by a collaborative of internal and external brand stakeholders. They are above all mindful of the central role that the employer and internal brand play in building a brand ecosystem in which employee and stakeholder relationships are brand inspired, aligned and fruitful [4, 8].

### **4. Employer brand and living the brand**

The employer brand comprises the sum total of benefits and features related to employment that an employer would want to be known for and is used to attract prospective talented employees to the brand as an organization [18]. In a high demand, short supply labor marketplace, the employer brand sees the application of brand building practices to the human resources recruitment function. An appealing, differentiated employer brand allows the employer to stand out from others vying for the same small pool of talented employees, providing a competitive advantage in attracting top talent who offer desirable skill sets and proven performance results high levels of potential for future growth and development, and show high levels of alignment to the purpose and values of the employer brand [9, 18].

As part of the employer brand, the employee value proposition (EVP) captures the benefits and unique value associated with employment. The EVP may include attractive financial rewards and/or appealing features related to the working environment, contract of employment, benefits or learning and development opportunities [6, 18].

The employer brand straddles two different functional areas in business. As a recruitment tool that sets out to attract talent employees and persuade them to join the company, the employer brand seems to fit in the human resources management

or talent management function. As a brand construct that portrays the purpose and values of the brand outwards to brand stakeholders, the employer brand also fits into the brand leadership and brand management stable [3].

The employer brand has a dual nature and function: firstly to attract talented prospective employees to the organization, and secondly to build overall brand strength and coherence through aligned, congruent brand building efforts [18, 19].

**Figure 1** depicts the employer brand emanating out of strategic brand leadership alignment around a clarified and purposeful brand identity at the center, which sees the purpose and values that lie at the core of the organization, being driven outwards by the employer brand. In return, the employer brand's brand building efforts reinforce and strengthen the brand identity that lies at the core of the brand through the many touchpoints that brand stakeholders have with the employer brand over time [6]. While the target market of the employer brand is prospective talented employees, the employer brand touches an entire ecosystem of brand stakeholders [19, 20].

Given the dual nature and function of the employer brand, it is understandable that employer brand creation and management is fragmented and disparate in both literature and practice. Importantly, there appears to be varying levels of involvement from brand management in employer brand creation and management [6, 21]. This presents a challenge to the employer brand in terms of fulfilling its key role in attracting employees that can optimally live the brand.

Employer brand building should target those potential talented employees that would add optimal value to the organization and its brand purpose in terms of their purpose-fit with the brand and their skill set [17, 20]. As such, the creation of employer brands should be a collaborative effort between human resources or talent management, brand or marketing management, leadership and line management [3, 6].

## **5. Internal brand and living the brand**

**Figure 1** shows the employer brand and internal brand emanating from strategically aligned leadership behind the clarified brand purpose. The arrows around the employer brand and internal brand depict the alignment between these two employee brand building platforms – an alignment which adds to the building of brand coherence.

The terms 'employer brand' and 'internal brand' are often used interchangeably, and both definitions have evolved over time. There are, however, clear distinctions between the employer brand and the internal brand in terms of their targeted audience, goals and contribution to living the brand. Whilst the employer brand targets prospective employees outside the company, the internal brand is concerned with current employees inside the company. The goal of the employer brand is to attract potential employees by positioning the brand purpose and by aligning the appealing benefits and features associated with employment. The goal of the internal brand is to retain the services of talented employees by delivering on the promises made by the employer brand in the employment experience [7, 18]. Whilst the employer brand attracts those employees that will authentically and optimally live the brand, the internal brand embeds and nurtures the brand purpose, vision, values and respected behaviors with employees, to build genuine and deep engagement and foster a lived brand in their daily work [7].

Functionally, a wide range of role-players and activities contribute to the internal brand. Internal brand building involves:

- Human resources management related to the employment contract and experience, such as salaries and benefits, and policies and procedures,
- Brand building and internal communication
- Leadership and line-management approaches and behaviors
- Workplace and working environment, conditions and requirements [7].
- And a myriad of internal and external formal and informal, planned and unplanned touchpoints influencing what employees come to think, feel and believe about the organization that they work for [18, 21].

In **Figure 1**, the internal brand and employer brand exist in context of the brand identity system, as it provides the purpose and values that drives all internal brand building behaviors, whilst the internal brand also reinforces and strengthens the brand identity by guiding and supporting current employees in embodiment of the brand purpose in their engagements and collaborations with brand stakeholders [20].

The interrelatedness of the internal brand with the employer brand depicted in **Figure 1** also flows both ways. The employer brand hands over to the internal brand once a potential employee has been recruited and employed, after which the internal brand is expected to deliver on promises made by the employer brand in the employment experience [7]. The internal brand also influences the employer brand as current employees' testimony and experience have an impact on the way in which the brand purposefully positions itself to prospective employees [20].

## **6. Brand coherence and living the brand**

When the organizational brand, employer and internal brand deliver in unison, congruent brand messages, behaviors and experiences across touchpoints with all brand stakeholders, it is evident that a committed leadership is investing in building an authentic and trustworthy brand [4, 14].

Brand coherence is achieved when all internal and external, formal and informal brand building platforms and contact points align, so that brand stakeholders experience the brand as true to its purpose and values in all that it does, whether a stakeholder engages with the brand as a customer, through an employee or as a supplier or community stakeholder [4, 5].

Strong company brands are immensely valuable, and this value is heavily dependent on the coherence with which the brand lives [14].

Brands have thus evolved from focusing primarily on the strategic direction of their planned marketing and communication campaigns to being fully alert to the impact of all their touchpoints, and in particular those most critical - those points of brand resonance with the most impact on stakeholders because of what the brand stands for. Equipped with sophisticated analytics and meaningful insights into stakeholder experiences, the brands of today are able to practice cohesive strategic thinking to realize the potential of the touchpoints that matter most. When a unique and

compelling purpose becomes an organization's chief pursuit and natural way of thinking and doing (a living brand philosophy, so to speak), across all brand, employer and internal brand touchpoints a meaningful brand is brought into existence. Enabled by its leadership and participative culture, employees are inspired and supported to operate in a mindful and nimble manner to create and deliver brand experiences that are always congruent with the brand's identity and unique reason for being [4, 17].

## **7. Principles and practices for living the brand**

**Figure 1** shows how the aligned employer and internal brand contribute to the building of brand coherence. Four arrows are shown to flow outwards from brand coherence, depicting the following four principles and related practices for living the brand. It is important to note these principles and related practices should preferably only be deployed from a place of brand alignment, where all the fundamental building blocks of clarified brand identity system, strategically aligned leadership, and an employer and internal brand that builds brand coherence is possible. The reason for this is that the principles and related practices essentially present deeper insights from leading global brands, scholars and experts that will allow companies to mobilize and boost the ways in which they set the stage for living the brand.

Four principles and related practices are discussed, along with examples and practical guidelines for implementation.

### **7.1 Living the brand principle and related practice 1: Rallying behind the brand purpose for meaningful work**

Neumeier applies three specific questions for the development of a unique and compelling statement of purpose: who are you, what do you do and why does it matter? The reason for existence of an organization emerges when it exposes why it does what it does and believes what it believes in [15].

We have established that a meaningful brand is a committed and principled brand. A brand that proclaims its purpose as an enhanced customer experience yet neglects its relationships with its own employees is not a brand with sustainable purpose. We have also reasoned that no internal brand community can simply be instructed to believe in the brand. The brand purpose forms such an intrinsic part of the organization and there must be compelling reason to believe that the brand actually matters [4, 14].

Recent studies have shown that employees are attracted to purpose-driven brands that add to the greater good and are eager to be part of the greater purpose of the brand [6, 19]. However, such studies also reveal that employees should be given an opportunity to contribute to the purpose and live the purpose through meaningful work [9, 15]. Employees should be shown how their work contributes to the fulfillment of the larger brand purpose and be encouraged to add value in the most appropriate way that they can. Daily work should be positioned in context of purpose, so that meaning is found in employment and work [16, 22]. Consequently leading brands encourage and enable their employees to become involved in purpose-driven initiatives, and to contribute practically to initiatives through hands-on work and advocacy through personal testimonies and stories [22].

There is a delicate relationship between the stated purpose and the lived reality of employees, a relationship that depends on a participative leadership culture and on

integrity, transparency and trust in the value being upheld by all employees and in all work activities [9, 22].

## **7.2 Living the brand principle and related practice 2: Attract and retain the right employees**

Brands should be clear and particular about the employees that the brand attracts and retains. The brand identity system and the cohesion of its lived reality depends on all employer and internal brand building efforts [5].

A global talent shortage means that talented, highly skilled employees are in high demand, but short supply. With companies competing against each other to attract and retain the services of talented employees from an ever-shrinking pool of skilled workers, it seems counter-intuitive to be too particular about the skills and attributes required for employment. Yet, leading global brands maintain that they hold aspirational standards for employment, and only those who meet all standards are considered for employment [6, 19]. These aspirational standards do not only include skills and qualifications required, but the type of attributes expected in terms of personal purpose, values and goals. Brands that hold the brand identity and requirements for living the brand central to attraction and retention of employees, invest the time and resources required to engage the right people [3, 16]. This investment pays off when the right employees are aligned and committed to the brand's purpose, and naturally live the brand values and behaviors as part of their daily decision-making and work [9]. Without meticulous requirements and expectations guiding the attraction and retention of employees, the employee-brand fit will be unlikely, which not only negatively impacts the brand and its ecosystem of stakeholders, but is also detrimental to employee engagement and retention [10].

Leading brands drive this principle and practice by ensuring cross-functional leadership collaboration in the identification and specification of the talented employees required to ensure that the organizational brand meets its strategic objectives. An overarching talent council or forum, which includes leaders from different functional or business units, oversees the talent requirements, efforts, and management. This talent forum is tasked with ensuring that potential talented employees are measured against clearly articulated requirements in terms of their personal and professional alignment to the brand purpose, values, and the way in which the brand should be brought to life in all stakeholder engagements. Potential applicants are screened against these requirements and assessed to gain insight into their personality, values and likely behavior at work [6, 20]. Respected brand behaviors are formalized in the employment contract, performance goals or key performance indicators and performance measurement and management [9].

Once employed, employees should resonate with the internal brand culture. However, internal brand building requires constant investment in nurturing, monitoring and showcasing purposeful brand behaviors. Upskilling would then also invest in new skills and qualifications required, as much as it would in evolved brand behaviors required [7, 15].

Living the brand must be embedded in the employee experience and daily work.

Recruiting and retaining the services of employees who are brand aligned in their heart, mind and deeds propel the organization's efforts to bring the brand to life through people in an authentic manner. It also ensures that the brand holds every potential to innovate, lead and sustain its reason for existing over time [20].

### **7.3 Living the brand principle and related practice 3: Enable employee brand advocacy**

Brand advocacy is the personal, authentic and open testimony of brand experiences and brand love that serves to advocate, endorse or promote a brand to others. Today's brand stakeholders are less likely to be engaged by narrative driven by the brand itself, preferring the narrative that others provide about the brand [10]. This trend has seen the rise of user ratings and comments as a reliable source of information, and the increase of influencers or spokespersons that endorse or promote a brand. As brand practitioners fondly say: A brand is no longer what you say it is, it is what they say it is.

Employees hold powerful potential for strategic brand building, not only in living the brand through their work, but also in their testimony and brand advocacy to others [9].

Brands that wish to enable employee brand advocacy should do so in an organized, structured manner. Leading brands suggest that employees are given platforms for brand advocacy, and that these platforms are managed as a part of strategic brand building. For example, the employer brand website page of a company can be the holding platform for the employment experience stories of employees. Companies can also create social media groups or profiles that encourage employees to post and share their brand advocacy stories [2, 10].

Employee brand advocacy can be valuable in positioning and driving the employer brand. Employee testimonies allow the employer brand to cut through the clutter and get the attention of prospective employees. Employee brand advocacy can be the differentiator of an employer brand in a marketplace where all employers are promising similar benefits and value. The employer brand's promised employment experience comes to life through an actual employee testifying to the realization of this experience, and will resonate and build trust with prospective employees [15, 23].

The central premise here is that brands should enable employee brand advocacy that is authentic, honest and real, but organize the manner in which this brand advocacy is deployed and both employee and brand are supported. This way brands can allow employees to lead the narrative while enabling brand cohesion [16]. When a disjoint does become evident in employees lived experience and advocacy of the brand, the misalignment can be explored in conversations and brand co-creation sessions with relevant stakeholders, upholding a participative leadership culture [14]. As Harvard Business Review author Curry (2020) states: "A failure to engage, or engaging in a manner that is hypocritical, willfully ignorant, or lacks cultural competence, is a recipe for disaster". Instead, brand should engage with employees, find ways to encourage employee brand advocacy, enable it through providing collaborative platforms and brand aligned opportunities to do so, and use employee brand advocacy as a yardstick against which to measure its own performance in nurturing and upholding its brand purpose and the ways in which the promised brand experience comes to life [16].

### **7.4 Living the brand principle and related practice 4: Employees as brand co-creators and brand contact council members**

Employees are not only important brand stakeholders – they are also a brand's most valuable assets in strategic brand building. Beyond living the brand in their daily work, employees can contribute meaningfully to the innovation and co-creation of the brand and serve as members of brand contact councils.

By allowing employees to become part of the brand's creation and contact or touchpoint management, brands are not only eliciting insights from a key brand stakeholder, but optimizing employee engagement and brand commitment as employees become invested in the full cycle of brand building, making them inseparably intertwined with the brand [5]. Practically, this means that organizational leadership should create opportunities for employee representatives to join brand discussions, especially pertaining to the delivery of purpose and value to stakeholders. Employees can provide a fair and honest assessment of how the brand is performing, and areas in which the brand should be changing, improving and delivering [9]. Leading global brands have welcomed and pursued the input of employees at critical decision moments or key business shifts and challenges. A word of caution, though: Employee brand co-creation is not about paying lip service to the involvement of employees, or ticking consultation governance boxes. The intention should be to provide opportunities for employees to participate, and to make those opportunities inclusive and unbiased, driven by a genuine and authentic desire to understand stakeholder needs and listen to feedback [5]. Hence the rise of innovative concepts such as listening sessions.

Employees could also play a pivotal role in the congruent delivery of desired customer experiences across brand contact points. Leading brands focus on what is termed an experience strategy: a way to connect customer experience with business strategy by managing every brand contact experience along the customer journey [17]. Forward thinking and holistically minded organizations implement brand experience strategy and contact audits across their ecosystem and stakeholder relationships. Brand contact management aims to achieve an integrated brand identity by ensuring that every point of contact between the brand and its stakeholder is aligned to and communicates and delivers on what the brand stands for. Brand contact management is driven by what some term a company 'brand contact council', which is a council or created group that is made up of a widely representative group of brand stakeholders – including employees [24]. By eliciting employee representatives on the brand contact council or related brand contact management committee, living the brand is activated and accelerated in three ways. Firstly, the brand contact council employee representatives will be able to establish brand contact points where employees should live the brand, and add insights as to how this should be done practically [14]. Secondly, the very involvement of employees on a brand contact council integrates the employee experience and employee opinion into the broader brand context, thereby building brand commitment and loyalty [23, 24]. Finally, employees who co-create the brand or serve on a brand contact council shape the nature, purpose and impact of internal brand building so that it resonates optimally with other employees and contributes optimally to the building of brand coherence and strength [24].

## **8. Conclusion**

Brands rely on employees to bring the brand to life as they connect with and build relationships with brand stakeholders during their daily work. Strategic brand building lays the foundation for an organizational culture and employee experience in which living the brand is not only possible, but inevitable.

For employees to live the brand, dedicated foundational guidelines should be followed and put in place. The most important of these, and the starting point of all brand building, is the clarification of a purpose-driven brand identity.

Purpose not only encapsulates the brand's reason for existence, but the value that the brand hopes to add to the lives of all brand stakeholders. Recent research confirms that employees care about the brand purpose, that they want to work for purpose-driven employers, and that they would like opportunities to participate in and contribute to the larger brand purpose in their own, unique way. Living the brand flows naturally from employees' that want to add to the greater good of the company by bringing brand purpose to life in meaningful work.

Living the brand also requires the creation and management of a purpose-driven and aligned employer brand and internal brand.

As a valuable brand stakeholder, potential and current employees should be attracted to the brand with an impactful and differentiated employer brand. Once employed, internal brand building targets employees in drawing them close to the brand and retaining them as they see the promises made in the recruitment process realized in the employment experience.

Strategic leadership alignment see an authentic congruence between the organizational brand identity, the employer brand and the internal brand. Whilst the employer and internal brands may straddle the functional domains of human resources management and brand management, living the brand compels cross-functional and participative leadership to invest in the creating and management of an employer brand that attracts the right people that will live the brand naturally and optimally.

If brands want to capitalize on and unleash the power of having employees that live the brand and build brand strength and coherence, they will have to ensure that the foundational guidelines outlined in this chapter are put in place first. The four principles and practices provided for living the brand aim to provide organizational leadership with clear, relevant, applicable and accountable ways in which living the brand can be activated and amplified as employee brand advocates and co-creators.

## **9. Limitations and recommendations for further research**

This is a perspective chapter, based on a critical review of literature and insights from previous studies. As such, the foundational guidelines and proposed principles and practices present a valuable snapshot of the current state of literature and abstractions thereof, but require scientific validation through further research.

Although every effort has been made to select the seminal authors and prominent studies in this field, the reference list is limited to the key sources and may not portray the full spectrum of literature reviewed and included in this chapter.

The primary research conducted by the authors [6, 11] was limited to South Africa and Southern Africa, and application of these insights to other regions or the global landscape should not be assumed.

Further research is recommended to shed light on leading practices in the strategic and operational collaboration of cross-functional organizational leadership as the principles and practices outlined herein is implemented in the organizational context.

The impact of employer and internal brand building on the overall company brand, or corporate brand has also been highlighted by scholars as an underexplored research area that requires further exploration and research.

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*Brand Management* discusses several issues of marketing management within the limits of marketing communication. Chapters address such topics as Internet marketing, the transition from offline to online in the process of building brand equity, standardization versus adaptation of brand elements in international markets, and “living” the brand.

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